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MY CONFESSION.

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MY CONFESSION;

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The Story of a Woman's Life,

AND

OTHER TALES.

ROBERT—"Here she comes."

[*Enter Violante.*]

VIOLANTE—"I pray you, gentlemen, pass me lightly by: I am too slight a thing to dwell on."

Choice of a Wife.

New-York:

J. C. DERBY, 119 NASSAU-STREET.

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MY CONFESSION.

"Those who have never loved as thou,
Will doubt in their dismay,
If Reason on thy burning brow
Poured its diviner ray;
They only know that feeble flame
Which most may quench and all may tame,
In their less sensate clay;
And deem the heart may calmly bear
The frenzied grief of love's despair."

WALTER COLTON.

"Silently fell the snow on her face,
Clothing her form in its stainless grace;
As though God in his mercy had willed, that she
Should *die* in a garment of purity."

I AM a woman. I have been beautiful. As I deem beauty the pride and glory of womanhood, I should become insincere, if I disclaimed the fact of once possessing it. I have passed through many trials, and endured much sorrow. I have sinned deeply, and in my very sin found punishment.

For the sake of those who are rich in an innocent youth, I shall lay bare my heart, and reveal, to the eyes of the great world, THE HISTORY OF MY LIFE. My

hand trembles as I begin to write; but even if my self-imposed task should cause me to shed tears of blood, I will not falter in my undertaking.

Heaven help me to write the truth, the solemn truth, and that only!

My maiden name was Adzema V——— i. My parents were Italians. Although I first saw the light in that beautiful America, where I am now passing the remainder of my burdensome existence, I speak the language of my forefathers purely and well. I do not think I was ever young. As I look back upon my youth, and compare it with the careless and gleeful lives of children in general, I am sure that I was old even then,—old in head and heart experiences. Of the plays and sports of other children, I knew nothing. I was much alone and isolated, yet not always unhappy; for, by being thus left to myself, I acquired a habit of intense thought, which, young as I was, proved a quiet joy and companion.

What the circumstances were that thus made me a careful, calculating, and reflecting woman, before I reached girlhood, it is not in my power to state, for I should then reveal things which are not and never were my own secrets, although their consequences fell heavily on my overburdened childish heart. The grave covers them now; let me not disturb them in their repose, or recall vain memories of a parent's misdeeds!

We were poor, and poverty alone has enough withering power to shut out the natural joyousness of youth. I was not an only child. I had one sister, younger than myself by several years. She was beautiful as the day, light-hearted as a bird, and the very opposite of my reserved self. While all deemed *me* sullen and haughty, *she* was beloved as the spirit of sweetness and good-humor. Never poet or painter conceived a more perfect form and face than those of my sister; Prometheus himself might have striven in vain to create a lovelier;—yet this very loveliness awoke in our parents a dislike to its possessor. They were Italian exiles, and had brought with them to their adopted country a strong love for that of their nativity. Long absence had strengthened, rather than weakened their patriotism. When Bianca opened her pale, blue eyes to the light of day, my father looked at her in unfeigned horror; and as year after year developed the white delicacy of her truly American beauty, both our parents grew to regard her with less love than they did myself, whose passions and appearance already betokened the fiery Italian blood.

Unnatural as it may seem, even this weak affection faded away as Bianca approached girlhood; and, had she not been removed from their care at an early age, I am confident she would have become, in the course of time, an object of positive dislike to them.

We were, as I said before, very poor; and when our landlord's childless wife offered to take my cheerful little sister, and cherish her as her own child, our father and mother gave a ready consent. So Bianca left her home for one of greater luxury and wealth, taking with her all the sunshine that illuminated our desolate abode. Months passed before I grew accustomed to her vacant place, or ceased to miss her joyous pleasantries. I was then just entering womanhood, and she was still a child. A change soon fell upon us. We often saw each other, but our affection became very different from when we were children together. The sunniness of Bianca's disposition caused her to love every one around her; but she was incapable, from the very universality of her good-will, of loving any *one* person deeply. I hope in saying so, I do not show a want of sisterly regard for the memory of her who will behold the light of this world no more. My own strong nature required a warmer love than she had to give me; and so a coldness grew up between us, which was accelerated, no doubt, by the disparity in our stations.

They say time has a balm for every wound; that there is no sorrow so severe as to be beyond the power of his healing. With me, this has not been the case; that old rupture of a family tie, at as late a period as this, has all the freshness of yesterday.

I was born and bred a Roman Catholic. In my earliest youth I was taught to turn to my religion for consolation in affliction. When my trials were greater than I could bear, I found in it that balm and peace which nothing but a religious belief can bestow.

Thus, under all my sorrows, I was not without a Friend, a kind, loving Friend, to whom all earthlier ones were valueless.

As far back as I can recollect, I always possessed a peculiarly imaginative turn of mind; consequently the visible services of the Roman Church had for me a singular attraction, fitting perfectly to my ideas of divine worship. Indeed, at one time of my life, I was so much guided by my imagination, that I am not sure but my religion was a species of infatuated romance. Be that as it may, it was to me a haven of rest, a Safety in which I put a holy trust. If I had been told that I should one day refuse to believe in it, I would have thrust away the impious insinuation in horror. I will not dwell upon the earlier part of my life; it is hateful to myself, and can convey no interest to my readers. I would not, willingly, place before any one the harrowing details of an unhappy childhood; my record being, indeed, not of the child, but of the woman.

Circumstances occasioned my marriage at an early age,—a marriage in which, however, my heart was

not concerned; *that* long before was given to one, who, as I thought, despised the gift—for was I not low-born and poor, and *he* of a high name and higher estate? I loved him as only a woman *can* love, and as even a woman loves but once.

When, attracted by my beauty, Ralph Carrington, a man of wealth, intellect, and position, asked me for his wife, my parents gave a ready consent; and I, poor fool, blinded by my wounded pride and bruised affections, yielded myself a willing sacrifice.

Unconstrained as I was in my decision upon this marriage, I suffered much, more than I can tell, as the time for its consummation approached. I well remember the agony I endured the night previous to my wedding-day. During the whole afternoon I had been wandering over our little house, in an uneasy and disturbed state of mind, flitting hither and thither like a troubled spirit. Finally, as twilight began to darken, I went for a few moments' repose to my own room. I was almost overcome by my aimless toil, and the inward workings of my poor passiveness. But, alas! the sight of the many trifling things scattered around it, which *he* had given me who was so soon to be lost forever, caused my courage to fail, and, overpowered by sweet and bitter memories, I threw myself passionately on the floor, (no place was low enough for my despair,) and wept as, I hope, but few

women of twenty-three had wept before. My mother came to me, and begged me to arise and descend to receive the greetings of Mr. Carrington's parents. In a fury of passion I refused to see them. I was delirious under the great burden of my unpaid love.

The night passed, and day, when it dawned, found me still lying there, moaning in childish helplessness, and weak and ill from utter exhaustion. When the faint streaks of golden sunlight came through the windows, I tried to summon strength to rise and arrange my disordered dress. My long, black hair was torn from its fastenings, and my whole appearance more that of a maniac than a woman in her senses. Staggering to the glass, I beheld a sight which frightened me—the warring passions, the fiery emotions that were there reflected, made me shudder. I looked like a fiend, but a strangely beautiful one. I could not but be conscious of my beauty, even in the despair of the hour; and, with a loud cry, I smote myself on the face, cursing the loveliness that had called forth the hateful affection of the man to whom I was about sacrificing myself—an emotion unworthy the name of love, for it was but a vile desecration of the pure reality.

I opened a window, and the cool, morning air blew on my face in welcome gusts. I grew more composed, my excitement passed partially away, and when I

heard the first faint stir of the family about the house, I had become something more like my natural self.

By this marriage I had two children, strong, robust boys, whose great resemblance to their father shut them out effectually from my hard, cold heart. I could not love them, although, in my better moments, I strove to do so—to love them as much in *reality* as my conscience compelled me, or *appear* to love their father. For, being his wife, I endeavored to do my duty by him as faithfully and scrupulously as mortal woman could.

Wretchedly, vainly, six years of my life flew away —bitter, hopeless years, in which I repented a hundred thousand times the passionate error of my youth that had made them so.

Who is there, if he could, would not undo past deeds? Who is there, as he looks back upon his vanished life, does not exclaim :—"O, that I could live it over again!"

During all these six long years I had never seen him in whose despite I had made to myself this martyrdom. Shortly after my marriage, he sailed for Europe. He never wrote to me; but it was not mine to forget, even though forgotten! Let me not be so unjust to myself, however, as to insinuate that I ever thought of him in any way as connected with the fu-

ture, which my husband himself, jealous as was his natural disposition, might have condemned. He had known all at the time of our marriage. I was far too proud to conceal from him not only that I did not love him, but also that I loved another. Low as I valued the nature of his love, and as I value it now, it must have been intense and strong to have still compelled him, after such an avowal, to wed me.

In the sixth year of our marriage, my husband, on account of ill health, was ordered, by his medical advisers, to a warmer and less variable climate than that of North America.

We went to Italy, balmy, poetic Italy—the native land of my exiled parents—my own ideal of an earthly paradise!

The first breath of real happiness that I had drawn for many a day was when, indistinctly and in the distance, I beheld the blue, curving lines of the Italian shores. My rapture settled down to a still and inward joy, when, after travelling, by slow degrees, through the most interesting portions of the country, we at length took up our residence in a fantastically charmimg villa near Rome. Speaking Italian, I soon grew as accustomed to Italian life as if I had known no other. My husband's lavish expenditure on the realization of my slightest whim, surrounded me with every luxury that had ever entered the imagination of man.

If I had not been happy before, I was happy then. Beautiful, beautiful Italy! never shall my sinful eyes grow purer by looking on you again!

Two years, brief as they were delightful, passed thus.

One night (how well I remember it!) as I was being dressed for a *fête à l'Anglaise* which was to take place in my own house, a servant came to inform me that a man desired to see me, and was waiting for that purpose in one of the smaller drawing-rooms. I was engaged, (Rosina, my maid, was just arranging my hair,) and thinking the request might, after all, resolve itself into a genteel petition for alms, (I was subject to appeals of this kind,) I sent the servant down to give the man some money, and bid him go away. Presently he returned bearing a slip of paper, on which the following words were traced in English, and in a handwriting I recognised immediately, although I had not seen it for years :—

"Adzema, I beg of you to see me for old acquaintance sake.

PAUL REMBRANDT."

Had the pride which actuated me in my marriage sustained me *then*, I should have refused to see him; but my only thought was a wild longing to look on him again.

Rosina hastily banded up my hair; I slipped on the dress I was to wear for the evening, and hurried down stairs.

I cannot describe our meeting;—indeed, I have almost forgotten it, for thirty years of sorrow have passed over my head since then. I only remember that he hurriedly told me he had come to beg a night's shelter of my husband; that he was a fugitive, and, in consequence of an offence against the government, was fleeing for his life. Ralph was away on a journey of a few days, and having been detained, was not at home to help me do the honors of my fête. Notwithstanding his absence, I assured Rembrandt of a perfect welcome to the hospitality and shelter of the house, in my own name, as well as in that of its absent master.

He had greatly changed since I had last seen him; he looked fully fifteen years older. His hair was almost grey, and the expression of his face much careworn. Involuntarily I asked myself if *I* too had changed; but my conscious matron pride gave me answer, that my beauty was as undimmed, as radiant as ever. With joy I hailed the welcome truth; for did it not prove to him that his rejection of my love had not been an unbearable sorrow?

He noticed this himself, and said, as he looked at me earnestly—

"Adzema, how very, very little you have altered."

"And *you*, oh! how differently"—I stopped, half ashamed of the impulsive words.

"Yes," he said, smiling sadly, "I feel I am not the same being I was eight years ago. Some day, if you will listen to my melancholy story, I will tell you all. You who were so full of sympathy for the unfortunate in by-gone days, will surely bestow a little on an old friend now."

Tears rose to my eyes unbidden. He spoke so very sadly, that there came before me the wretched picture of my lonely girlhood, when I had loved him hopelessly, passionately, and,—*in vain!* Suddenly I started up. Some fiend, some devil from hell itself, must have possessed me. In burning words, whose meaning I did not myself know until they were uttered, I poured forth to him the tale of that miserable secret. Womanly modesty, womanly self-respect was forgotten. I was crazed, I was wild; I knew not what my lips said. I, so cold, so haughty, so scornful of all the unhallowed love offered at the shrine of my beauty since my marriage—*I*, poor fool, blinded and reckless, laid my heart open, *unsolicited*, to the eyes of him who had once despised it.

As I proceeded, the fiery eagerness of my manner increased. Regardless of every thing, even *his* amazement, on—on I went with the rush of a swollen torrent, whose course was already too long impeded. Yet I

distinctly remember, even at this remote time, that I spoke only of a love that had been, and not of one that *was*.

Oh! how he looked at me when I had done,—when, at last, I stood there in silence, humiliated at my folly and madness;—worse, my sin, for such I deem it now. How pityingly he looked at me, how tenderly, and yet how wildly! Love, surprise and fear, blended in his pure eyes,—a fear great and deep for the preservation of his strength. Then, too late, I became aware of my childishness. Bowing my face in my hands, I could only weep. Such tears! blood would not have so taken the life from my heart as they.

And then he told me, in words as sorrowful as they were few, how once, a long while before, he had loved me, but imagined he loved in vain!

I repeated scornfully this word "*imagined*" from between my clasped hands. He paused, hesitated a moment, and then said calmly—

"And yet not altogether imagined, Adzema, for those near and dear to you told me your affections were already given away. We have thus both suffered alike. Let us forget and forgive all of pain we may unconsciously have occasioned each other."

I took away my hands and looked at him. O good, great man, how well I recollect the horror with which he appeared filled at the confession he had just spoken.

He seemed as though he hated himself for it; although *I* had lost sight of the delicacy of a wedded wife, *he* had not;—he had respected it far more than I had respected it myself.

Guests were beginning to arrive. I heard their feet pass up the broad stair-case to the dressing-rooms. Suddenly I became aware that it was necessary I should receive them, and just then a brisk tap at the door gave warning that Rosina had come to inform me my duties as hostess were already too long deferred. I ran to open it, but instead of Rosina, saw the angry flushed countenance of Ralph. He entered. I understood so well the jealous disposition of my husband, that instinctively I dreaded the meeting of these two men. Well I might, for Ralph arriving but a few moments before, had gone to my room, and found there, instead of myself, Paul Rembrandt's note lying on my dressing-table.

Knowing nothing of the circumstances under which it was written, and remembering Rembrandt only as one who had possessed my love, heated and displeased, he had come to seek me in person.

Rembrandt advanced to meet him with a somewhat embarrassed, but warm greeting—a warmth which I knew his generous soul really felt. Ralph received him haughtily and coldly. This reception prepared me too well for his consequent inhospitality. I do not

feel myself capable of giving the scene which followed in detail. My memory fails me on some points, and on others I will not even permit myself to think, for they make my breast burn anew with its old dislike for him whom I once vowed to love and obey. What mockery of words!

It is enough to state, that Ralph refused the shelter of his roof to his astonished countryman, and that, in language, which any one less excitable than Paul Rembrandt would at once have resented.

Ralph was violently angry, and evidently thought Mr. Rembrandt's story a *ruse* to hide the suspicious appearance of a discovered meeting. For once, my presence of mind and strength of purpose deserted me. I dared not plead to my husband for Rembrandt, or assert, as I would have done in a calmer moment, *my* right to extend to an old friend the refuge he so much needed.

Loftily and proudly Rembrandt left the room, and it was not until I saw the door close upon him, that my senses returned. I heard the echo of his feet up the graveled walks to the carriage way beyond, and I heard, too, the rain pattering in torrents upon the ground. He was gone, and in that terrible storm!

Before morning he might be in the hands of his pursuers; I knew too well the awful after fate of all political offenders against the despotic government of Italy.

What could I—what should I do, passed like lightning through my brain. I flew, rather than walked, up stairs to my own apartments. I knew Rosina to be a girl entirely devoted to my interests,—I determined to make use of her services in recalling Rembrandt. A promised reward and a whispered caution had all the effect I could desire, and not stopping even to throw a hood over her well-shaped Italian head, she sprang down the stairs to the back entrance, and was soon lost to view in the night and rain. In twenty minutes of suspense she re-entered my dressing-room. The rain had by this time abated, yet the poor child was dripping wet.

"Signora," she exclaimed, breathless with haste, "the Signor would not return with me as you desired; but he bade me say, if you have any message to send him, he will await me just without the gates."

There was no help for it! I *must* save him! I tried to persuade myself that, for the sake of by-gone times, it was my *duty* to snatch him from his impending fate. Pausing long enough to envelope myself in a mantle, I started out to seek him myself. Gathering up my satin ball-robe, I ran along the paths and through the gardens with fevered eagerness. The stars were beginning to appear through the dispersing clouds, and by their dim light I found him leaning, with folded arms, against the pillars of the entrance.

Never shall I forget the surprise, the grateful amazement with which he recognized me. He took my cold hands in his, and while he blessed me again and again, with mingled gentleness and firmness bade me go immediately back. In vain I implored him to return with me.

"What," said he proudly, "shall I take by stealth the hospitality denied me openly? You do not know me, Adzema, if you consider me capable of such an action."

Once more I forgot myself. My old love came gathering around my heart. I threw myself before him on the wet grass, and begged him, for my sake, to avoid so great and fearful a danger, as detection must inevitably prove.

"For *my* sake, Paul," I cried wildly, "for the sake of the love I once bore, and *still* bear you, yield these false feelings of pride."

It was a wicked speech, reader; I am well aware of that; but possibly the open manner in which I confess it, may create excuse for me in your eyes. I can have no object in writing this slight autobiography to conceal anything from you, or make my offences against God or man less palpable than they are.

By the tones of his voice, when next he spoke, rather than the expression of his face, for that, by the the faint light, I could scarcely see, I knew his resolu-

tion was staggered. I saw my advantage, and continued to plead, as a drowning man might, for a last attempt at his rescue; *he yielded*, yielded to my will, blindly and wholly. Happy as I felt then, there mingled with my joy a sense of humiliation, such as I never but once afterwards experienced. Though circumstances were extenuating, and I had done evil that good might come of it, I still felt myself an humbled and ignoble temptress.

Adjoining the villa was a high and pleasantly sloping hill. At its base were the remains of an old tomb or vault, which, years before, had been the burial ground of the first owners of the mansion. I knew it to be well concealed by trees and shrubbery, and horrible as the idea appeared, I determined to make it Rembrandt's hiding-place; well convinced, should his pursuers track him to the villa, that it would be the last spot which they would search, if they even discovered its existence. I conducted him passively to it; with trembling hands, refastened the half worm-eaten door, and hastened back to the house. I was wrought up to great nervous excitement. How I managed to elude the prying eyes of the servants, on my return, I know not.

Exhausted as I was, I began a change of toilette, and, with Rosina's assistance, soon exchanged my wet and mud-stained robe for one fresh and dry. With

hypocrisy on my face, and a smiling lie on my lips, I descended to my guests. Out of very defiance to nature, I exerted myself to appear unconcerned and at my ease. I saw Ralph was keeping a strict and stern watch upon my movements, and for that reason, I strove to be apparently more gay and joyous than usual. Should a dejected mein show him how he had triumphed over me? No! my share of woman's pride was too great for that. Never were more admiring eyes bent on me; never did I so stoop to conciliate favor; never was I as merry, as careless, and gleeful,—all with a hidden worm gnawing my heart-strings. Gracefully as I possessed the power, I enacted the part of an affable hostess, until, at last, the "wee sma' hours" found my husband and myself alone in our deserted banquet-rooms. Coldly, and with a mutual sense of estrangement, we separated for the night, neither dreaming what events the next day was to bring forth.

Excitement then gave way to a feeling of intense exhaustion. Still dressed in the mockery of the evening, I flung myself on my bed, and tried to rest. Sleep did not visit my eyes. What a night was that! I seemed to live anew the days of the regretted Past —that fearful monster, who had buried in its deepest tomb, my faith in happiness and my youth. Gone were they both, never to be mine again! My humble

home came before me, as though its presence might be attested by the senses; there arose, too, a sweet vision of Bianca and our early years of sisterhood. Many scenes of my girlish days were renewed;—as I lay there, hot and feverish, the woman was wholly lost in recollections of the girl.

Morning dawned, and with it vanished my half-crazed visions. At the breakfast table Ralph was absent and abstracted; there was a stiff coldness in his attentions during the meal, that I could not but remark, and which proved to me, that my offence (if it were one) was not to be forgiven.

On retiring to my dressing-room, I immediately took Rosina to my counsel again. My difficulty now was to transmit food to Mr. Rembrandt, without observation. To do so, seemed to my guilty conscience an impossibility; but it *must* be done, and, with Rosina's assistance, it *was* done! Food, dry raiment, and fire-wood, were secretly conveyed to the old tomb; but all attempts that I made to visit it myself were vain, because Ralph's stern eyes were ever upon me.

A new excitement, a new subject for alarm, was soon created. About four o'clock in the afternoon we were disturbed by the arrival of some half dozen Italian officials, who had traced Mr. Rembrandt to our villa. Ralph, of course, gave them indignant permis-

sion to search the place from roof to cellar; and, consequently, a thorough examination took place, thank heaven, without success! After overturning the whole arrangement of the house, they at last departed; and shortly after, in the first dusk of the evening, I found an opportunity to absent myself unobserved.

As I reached the vault, I was startled by perceiving the figure of a man standing at the entrance. The first moment of affright over, I recognized, in the uncertain light, my poor prisoner engaged in fastening the door. Seeing me, he turned and came to meet me.

"Oh, Mr. Rembrandt," I cried, "are you crazy that you thus risk your life? Have you not heard, even here, something of the tumult that has just passed? Do you not know the house has been searched by men, who will give you over to almost sure destruction if they discover your hiding-place? Back, back, I implore you—back, as you value your life!"

"I had rather, Adzema," he answered, solemnly, "I had rather a thousand times put myself in their hands voluntarily, than act again, for a single hour, the unjust part which, to-day, I have acted against *you*." He took my hand as he spoke, drew me within the gray old tomb, and closed the door, which was half unhung, from its rusty hinges.

What a scene was that within! In the middle of

the stone floor burned a flickering fire, that lit up, at fitful intervals, this dismal abode of death and corruption. The ghastly light, playing over the damp and mildewed walls, frightened me in spite of myself, and made the drops of moisture upon them glitter like so many fiery eyes. In one corner lay the remains of what I suppose must once have been human bones, looking all the more hideous by the red light. Whatever my foot touched, as Rembrandt led me towards the fire, made me recoil with the idea that it had once been animate with human breath. Notwithstanding my fear, my lips were not idle. I begged him to wait but a little while, and give his pursuers time to get somewhat out of his way. My words were wasted and useless. He told me that it was impossible to remain there longer, "yes," said he, "even if *certain* death were the consequence. I despise myself for having consented to come here at all, and have waited impatiently for night and darkness to cover my flight. Words, my dearest friend, cannot express my thanks to you, but a sense of right compels me to go; my lingering here, in this doubtful and secret way, unknown to your husband, compromises your dignity, and exposes you to the misconstructions to which a discovery of my retreat would most certainly give rise."

Scarcely had the words left his lips, when the door

was suddenly thrust aside with the fury of one in the fiercest and hottest of wraths, and, quivering with excitement, my husband strode into the tomb.

"So," cried he, "most unworthy of women, *this* is the way you guard the honor of your husband! *This* is the way you obey him to whom you have sworn obedience—shameless, unfaithful wife!"

He grasped me by the arm as he spoke, and flung me violently against the side of the vault; then confronting Rembrandt, he poured out a torrent of invective, and denounced him by the vilest names that one of God's creatures ever cast upon another. For some moments, the violence of the shock prevented utterance. When physical anguish permitted me to speak, I clung to my husband, and besought him to hear me.

Once again he thrust me passionately away; and it was the last time his hand ever touched mine. Had I known that then, I might, perhaps, have quelled the demon which that cruel blow made to rise up withinme.

I must have fainted from the effects of my fright and pain, because I know nothing more of this terrible scene. When I awoke to consciousness, I was in my own room, Rosina bending anxiously over me. Looking into her kind Italian eyes, as they gleamed down pityingly in mine, I bade her tell me what had happened, and how I came there. She only answered with sighs and tears. At last she burst forth:—

"O Signora, dearest Signora, the Signor is very, very ill. The Padre is here to confess him, and the avvocato to draw the will. O Signora, Signora, the good Virgin look down on you both!"

Gradually I gathered, from the confused and frightened exclamations of the girl, that Ralph had broken a blood-vessel, and was not expected to survive the night. I recall to mind, most vividly, the effect these tidings had upon my frame in its weakened and enfeebled state. I neither wept nor spoke. My sensations were those of one suddenly stunned. For hours I lay as in an incomprehensible dream. I could not command my thoughts sufficiently to realize in the least degree the threatened calamity.

I did not awake from my trance till Rosina, in great dismay, summoned to my aid the physician who was attending my poor husband, and entreated him, with clasped hands and streaming eyes, to save me *per l'amore di Dio*. A refreshing powder soon had a beneficial effect on my system. My tardy senses were opened to the truth.

They would not admit me to my husband's chamber, when I tried to go to him. At the close of the next day, however, the venerable Padre came to conduct me to him.

"Walk and speak gently, daughter," he whispered, as I entered the room; "we know not on how frail a thread his life may depend."

I went to him with a softened and tender heart; but I soon saw that my visit was not intended to be one of explanations or pardon.

As I approached the bed on which my husband reclined, supported in half sitting posture, he motioned me, with white and bloodless hand, to a chair, and slightly bowed his head, as a signal to the avvocato who stood near him.

Astonished at the sight of so many witnesses of the interview, (his nurse and doctor were also in attendance,) I sank, faint with my own illness, to the seat designated.

He was changed—O, how changed! His face was as white as the pillows on which it lay; his eyes, darker than I had ever seen them, were deeply sunken, and glowed with unearthly brilliancy. Every few moments that transparent hand carried a handkerchief to his lips, and brought it away with a fatal spot of delicate pink on its white folds.

For a few moments silence reigned in the room, unbroken, save by the rustling of the lawyer's papers, as he spread them out on a little stand at the side of the sick man's bed.

When all was ready, at a sign from Ralph, the avvocato turned towards me, and said, in a professional manner and tone—

"I am commissioned by your husband, Signora, to

acquaint you with the contents of his will, which I have this day drawn up. The conditions attached to it are somewhat unusual, and it is for the purpose of ascertaining whether you are willing to comply with them, that I now read it aloud in your presence before it is signed by witnesses. Such is the express desire of your husband." The man spoke without any of the feeling natural to the circumstances; but it was not that which enchained me motionless to my seat. Presentiments, vast and shadowy, were growing out of this strange scene, and fastening on me. The will was read. I scarcely heard it,—but one single sentence entered my brain—

"I give and bequeath to my wife, Adzema, my estates, &c., &c., on condition that she never marry again,—otherwise I leave her nothing more than the law insists."

The conflicting emotions that filled my heart can better be imagined than described. My recollections of them now are like those of some frightful and oppressive dream. I *knew*, without seeing, that Ralph was watching my slightest movements and gesture, and I felt, too, that his glance was both stern and cold, even in its intensity. Presently the lawyer ceased reading; there was a pause;—Ralph seemed to wait for, and expect my answer.

I arose from my seat. For a moment I did not

speak; I could not. I tried to tell him, in fiery words, of my utter regardlessness of all he might do, but they came not; and I stood there before him, sick and bewildered. Very soon my strength returned. The restrained passions, the agonies of years, burst forth from the poor breast that could no longer contain them.

Fiercely I told him that I had not only never loved, but at that moment I hated him. Unmindful of the looks of mingled horror and compassion with which the attendants on my husband's death-bed eyed me, I proceeded, loudly and passionately:—

"Away with your hateful bribes," I cried. "I sold myself for your money *once*, but, thank heaven, I will not be bought or sold again, for the selfishness either of life or death!"

He shuddered, and turned even paler than before. I saw it. I rejoiced in it. A thrill of revengeful triumph went through my whole frame. I cannot tell what bitter things I said after this. When, outraged by my words, they tried to take me from the room, I cried out, with all my voice:—

"Let me alone! I have borne with him during the best and freshest part of my life. I have never complained or uttered aught against him; let him bear with *me* now. I must, I *will* speak." I turned towards

him again, but they bore me away. *I never saw him more.*

During the long and sleepless night that followed, I repented in sackcloth and ashes my savage words to a dying man. I shrank in horror from the idea of that being our last meeting on earth. Humbled to the dust, meekly and penitently, in the darkness of night, I crept down to his room, determined to speak with him once more—to ask him to forgive the violence into which I had been hurried. They refused me admittance, justly deeming that I was no fit visitant for a death-chamber. I begged, prayed and entreated. I promised to restrain myself; to say nothing; to give up my hopes of hearing him speak his earthly pardon, if they would but let me see him. They denied me; saying he was not to be excited farther,—that he was then dying. I humbled myself as I had never been humbled, save to my Creator, but gently they rejected my petition, and then I knew it was because *he* had said so, and that he dreaded to see me again.

I suffered tortures during the rest of that awful night. I felt I deserved it all; that much as I had patiently endured throughout his life, I had, by final passion, forfeited all right to be with him when he died. And so it was. His eyes were closed by other hands than mine.

I have a faint recollection of the unnatural stillness that for a long while afterwards reigned in the house, and of the sad faces of the servants, as they moved to and fro with slow and noiseless steps. I think my senses must again have been numbed—all this seemed so unlike reality to me at the time.

As months passed on, Italy grew hateful to me. It awoke too many unpleasant reflections, and I returned to America. My father and mother were dead. With my two boys I took up my residence in a pretty cottage near Tarrytown, on the Hudson river. There, on the income which the law allowed me from my husband's property, I lived secluded and alone, brooding over the past, and hoping happiness and domestic love for the future.

At length I married again. I married him with whom my heart had always been, and with whom it is now, although he, too, is in his grave. We were very happy together in those few years. Happiness is too tame a word for such overflowing bliss!

Is there not more than happiness in the union of perfect love and tastes, artistic and perfect in themselves?

We were more, O, far more than merely *happy;* and when he died, great God! I was unutterably more

than *unhappy!* I never desired to see the light again; I longed to die. More than once was I tempted to cast back, myself, the gift of life to my Creator. God pity me! What repose would have been sweeter to me than that of death, if I but lay across the sods that cover *his* breast? Did I not have gentler thoughts when, often, in those nights long with tears, my cheek rested on that wet grass? Did not my heart beat with more resignation when so near you, Paul? God pity me, God pity me! I am alone now.

It was a sweet and quiet day in June. Earth, sky and river shone as bright as when they first gleamed out of chaos. I stood at the gate of our peaceful country home to bid my husband God-speed on his journey. My dark-eyed, rosy little girl—his child—clung shyly around my knees, when her step-brothers came to give their parting kiss, laughing and weeping by turns as she saw them clamber into the tiny chariot. They were going back to school after the spring holidays, and Paul, kind, generous Paul, ever more mindful of others' pleasure than his own, was going to drive them there in the pony carriage, as an agreeable variety from the usual mode in which they travelled to and fro at each semi-yearly vacation. I watched the

chariot till the brisk ponies bore it out of the range of vision. And then I sat down on the fresh spring grass, and wove a crown of leaves for the hair of my bright darling, who would scarcely stand still for pretty childish tricks, while I wreathed it around her fair head. As I looked at her, half dancing before my pleased eyes, I thought my cup of bliss was surely full. And before night the tidings came that dashed it forever from my thirsting lips. A bridge, about four miles distant, that spanned an inlet from the river, had given away with the chariot upon it; and the exulting waters devoured those three lives—one of them dearer to me than my own!

There, by the side of that dead man, whom alone of all the whole world I had ever really loved, loved with all the powers of my being, I made a solemn vow. A fierce determination took possession of my soul. I vowed that my child should never feel aught of love for either God or man; never know of the existence of that Deity who had, as I believed, forsaken *me;* and in the uncertainties of an earthly affection, I also promised myself that her happiness should never become involved. Alas! what was I doing, but shutting her out from the two glories of time and eternity!

My mind was filled with a multitude of emotions. I had suffered so much, so deeply, myself—my affections had been so bruised, my whole life so miserable—that, in my grief, I rebelled against the hand that smote me;—I denied my Lord!

"If there *were* a God and Creator," I exclaimed, in the bitterness of my wrath, "would he thus afflict a poor creature, who has worshipped him with a life-long devotion—who has placed in him her all of hope and confidence; would He, who is represented as great, good and holy, visit his humble disciple with agonies which the fiend himself might bestow upon his angels? No! *there is* NO *God and no Creator!* I DENY his existence! A GOD would not send such undying anguish to one who ever knelt to him in prayer."

Many years of infidel hopelessness passed, in grief that refused to be comforted. The smile of my Creator was never mine,—His presence was never near me. In hard, cold unbelief, my life went down to the past, while the future loomed up amid a darkness deeper than that of night.

I now come to a part of my life to which I revert with agony of spirit. I would give all my hopes of heaven, if I could wipe out its sins. I will write of it briefly;—my pen and brain are alike wearied.

At my dear husband's death, I had sworn to guard my child from the rocks on which her poor mother's

hopes had been wrecked. I had vowed that she should live ignorant of the existence of her God, and free from the influence of mortal passion.

To accomplish my purpose, I purchased a quiet tract of country in a part of western Ohio, which was then almost removed from the knowledge of men. There, I thought I might, myself, live and die in peace, undisturbed and in perfect seclusion, and my child, my tender-hearted Azalie grow up to become a happier and purer minded woman than those bred in great cities. My vow! it, too, was there, and only there to be fulfilled!

It was a lovely spot,—wild as nature made it, it pleased me with its rugged beauty. Green with venerable trees, lofty mountains rose on either side of it, hiding all but heaven from the eye.

No road or footpath led to the little log-dwelling that I caused to be erected. It was reached with much difficulty, and being situated miles away from other habitations, it was as secluded as if on an island in the bosom of the ocean.

Along the mountain's sides I had some fields cleared for cultivation. While I chose them with a view to a good sun exposure, I also took pains to select them in a hollow, that concealed their existence. I lived there, alone, for many years. I retained but one servant, an aged man who had grown up in the ser-

vice of my husband's family, and who was devotedly attached to me and my daughter. He was the only partaker of my retirement; my solitude was enlivened by no other companion. Hundreds of miles away from those who knew me, my child, my Azalie, was my all. Every day strengthened my love for her; she became my idol, my religion, my God!

For her sake, all the toil and drudgery of that singular life I cheerfully endured. With my own hands I aided to cultivate the ground; with the once delicate members which, sparkling with jewels, princes, in olden days, had kissed, I sowed and reaped, and gathered in abundant harvests. Unwearied, I labored early and late, for on my exertions, principally, depended our daily bread; Martin, dear old man, being too old and feeble for an excessively active life. This was of little moment, as I was prepared for all trials, all labors, in the accomplishment of my purpose. I doubt if I should have permitted even that venerable and time-proved domestic to share my exile, were I not continually tormented with the fear of suddenly dying in that wood-solitude, and leaving my child to perish of hunger, far removed from human aid.

I do not know, though, how I could have refused his moving prayer, to remain in my service till he died. "It will not be long, dear Mrs. Rembrandt," he said, beseechingly—"I am very old; you will soon

cease to be troubled with me. I was born in the service of the Rembrandts, and, Lord willing, I should like to *die* in it. My kin are all dead; I have not another friend in the world but you!" Was it a wonder he remained with me?

How well I remember the fair, peaceful summer day when he made me this humble petition. I had been paying the other servants their wages, and giving them their dismissals. It was just previous to my removal to the West. Old Martin came slowly up the steps to the long shady piazza on which I sat, and as he fumbled with his rustic straw hat, spoke to me those memorable words. I shall never forget them. They touched the bottom of my heart. As the wind tossed back his long, white locks from his wrinkled forehead, I said to him, "Go, Martin, and be happy; you shall remain with the last, poor remnant of the noble family in which you were reared."

Without explaining my reasons for removing to that distant Western home, I made him promise never to mention, in Azalie's presence, the names of God or heaven; and, at the risk of quitting me forever, he did so promise, although I could see it sorely troubled his good old heart. In case of my death, he also promised to take my child immediately to her aunt Bianca, who had given me a solemn vow, when I visited her for the last time, previous to my going

away, that if Azalie ever became an orphan, she would take the guardianship of her, her fortune, and of poor old Martin also. But I hoped to live for many a year, and mould the heart of my daughter, as I believed, would fit her best for her life-battle with the world. Fervently did I desire that my task might not be interrupted—that I might live till my undertaking was completed; then, I thought, she could go out and mingle with her fellow-beings in safety, *after I had hardened her heart to God and man!*

Four times a year I made a journey to the nearest settlement, which was situated about thirty-five miles farther South. The only animal I employed on my miniature farm, was the horse of which I made use on these occasions. Martin was not able to bear the fatigue of the long ride, and, to tell the truth, I preferred to go myself, assured that I could more easily baffle curiosity than he. I usually returned well-loaded after these excursions, for they were the only opportunities I possessed of providing my little family with suitable clothing for the different seasons, and of procuring those necessaries and luxuries which are not the produce of an American farm. At these periods, also, I posted and received letters, welcome enliveners of my solitude. So devious and rough were the roads that led to this settlement, independently of the difficulty I found in getting from our cabin to the road

itself, that many days of weariness invariably succeeded the journey. Once I was overtaken by a storm, and, having lost my way, wandered about for twelve dreary hours, until both my own courage and my patient steed's, gave way. Had not these visits been absolutely necessary, I scarcely think I should ever have ventured within sight of humanity. But we could not live quite like savages, nor could I give up the luxury of hearing occasionally from Bianca, and some few other friends, who took sufficient interest in my fate to write to me.

Thus, I existed for long, long years; I scarcely know how many, for, in my strange and not uncongenial pursuits, I lost regard for the reckonings of time.

My daughter grew very beautiful. It filled me with mad disappointment to see it. I had longed for her to become a plain and unattractive woman, that she might thus the better repel the attacks of that which I then deemed woman's greatest enemy—Love. She grew very beautiful. Her large, wondering eyes were of the brightest and most defiant hazel; her features were tenderly, not *coldly* classical; and her black hair, and white, open forehead, looked like an abrupt contrast of shadow and sunshine.

I educated her myself. Who else was there in that wilderness to whom to entrust her instruction, and to whom *would* I have entrusted it? By degrees, I

taught her all I knew—that, alas! was not much—a correct knowledge of the English and Italian languages forming the greatest features of her education.

For her reading, I took the utmost pains to give her only such books as would afford her harmless pleasure, and yet contain no reference to religion. Travels, and quiet domestic stories, were all I placed in her hands. Here, let me distinctly state, that I had not desired, at any period of her life, to inspire her with a disgust for society, nor a hatred of her fellow-creatures. Such a feeling I had never cultivated myself, nor had it been any part of my object in her seclusion.

It was wondrous what a fondness I acquired for this desolate existence. I was contented and almost happy; as happy as I could be after the death of one I loved as much as my dear husband. I grew stronger and healthier than I remember having been before or since. By constant labor in the open air, my hands lost their delicacy, and my person its fragile appearance; but I was too earnest, too energetic in my purpose, to care if all outward traces of the woman were lost in the savage. I was fast becoming one—a savage in soul as well as body. My conscience could not become entirely lulled as to the course I was pursuing. Although I did not believe in the existence of a Deity,

and wantonly allowed one of heaven's holiest spirits to live unconscious of its Creator, I could not stifle the occasional remorse that gave me warning of my sin. Did I yield to it? No! I was not easily to be turned aside from my aim.

Azalie was an uncommonly thoughtful child for her years. Her desire for knowledge was great; so much so, that I often taxed my powers severely, in order to gratify her natural curiosity, without revealing more than I desired or believed. Like myself, she was of an imaginative temperament.

It became remarkable, sometimes, how near she frequently came in her search for information, to the very subjects which, of all others, I wished to avoid. One day we were walking homeward, from a long ramble in the majestic old forests that surrounded my little farm in all their undefiled beauty. As we neared home, the west grew brilliant with sunset; everything, as far as eye could reach, looked, in the faint dimness of the softened light, as if gifted with a fresh loveliness.

Coming to an opening in the wood, the child appeared struck with the chastened magnificence of the scene, and paused several times to look around her and comprehend its subdued splendor. A new thought striking her, suddenly, she turned quickly towards me, and exclaimed:

"How did the world get so beautiful as this, mother? What makes the sun gleam every night on the trees in this way? O, look at that great maple, see it shine! I wonder what made the sun to shine the first, the *very* first time on the world!"

I tried to satisfy her curiosity, by telling her what I had forced myself to believe of the self-production of the earth; but she was not at all content with my explanations, and walked along at my side, half murmuring to herself the words, "I wonder who makes the sun to shine!"

Instinct had already taught her that there *must* be some high source whence everything that was wondrous and beautiful in nature derived its wonder and beauty. She seemed, thenceforth, to *feel* that there had been a creation of the world by some Almighty, invisible, but glorious Being.

Long after that summer day's ramble, I was able to trace the workings of her young mind, by the imaginative conjectures which frequently broke out in wondering utterance.

The wildest Indian that roamed our shores of old, came into life with a like instinct. It is as natural to humanity as the power of speech; only death can destroy it. Historians record it as a startling fact, and travellers write in amazement, of its existence among the most remote and barbarous of unknown nations.

Think of this, and ponder well on it, oh! ye who deny Him who called the earth out of chaos, and gave its rich inheritance of human life!

Days glided past; months and years vanished. Time told me I was growing old, and I felt the truth. The cares and sorrows I had endured all my life now began to manifest their effects outwardly. My beauty was not only faded, but almost gone from me. Every week added to the grey of my head and the deep furrowed lines of my face. I can scarcely express how much this gradual change affected me. I had so long felt a triumph in my physical superiority over other women, that it caused me more than humiliation to see it thus pass away forever. In the time of my youth and poverty I had defied wealth, dominion, and luxury, through my beauty, and by it I had risen above my obscure position. Though but the simple dower of nature, through its means I had eclipsed those higher born than myself, and won riches, power and love. All the pride of my nature was based upon the consciousness of my beauty—a pride which had none of the attributes of vanity, however—but such a pride as, in the days when I believed in God, had caused me to bless Him for it in my nightly prayers. I felt that the

angels in heaven were all beautiful, and it was a balm of consolation to think that I was like them in something.

When this beauty began to fade, great, deep and unbounded was my grief. There still hangs at the side of my dressing-glass the same delicately executed miniature, representing me in the bloom of my youth, which long ago I placed there as a check on my repining, that it might show, day by day, the stern and increasing contrast between what I *was*, and what I had been.

Thus I accustomed myself to age and wrinkles. It was a victory worth double all it cost!

One evening in the early Spring, (my sweet child-daughter was sixteen or seventeen years old at the time,) as we were about retiring for the night, there arose a sudden and violent storm, that rocked the cabin to its foundation.

The rain descended like one unbroken sheet of water, and in the tempest of winds we could hear, without, the crashing of the old forest trees, as they fell uprooted to the ground.

Involuntary thoughts of death came over my infidel mind, yet I tried to hide my alarm for the sake of my

poor frightened Azalie, who clung to me as though I possessed the power of protecting her from the warring elements. Occasionally, the shriekings and howlings of overtaken animals in drowning agonies smote painfully on the ear; but above everything, I heard the wild dash of those mighty waters, and my guilty soul could think of naught but them. Good God! they were accumulating,—they were rising,—I saw it, by the stream beginning to flow under the doors, slowly yet resistlessly! I was nigh frantic. Even now the recollection of that appalling storm calls up a shudder.

Why, in that hour of affright, did I think so fearfully of the heaven-descending deluge that of old destroyed men for their sins?

In the very height of the tempest, just as old Martin was trying to prove to me that the excessively vivid lightning and deafening peals of thunder were tokens of a speedy abatement, we were startled by hearing from without some half dozen furious attempts to force the door, which being succeeded by clamorous and roughly eager demands for admittance, left no doubt that human beings had found their way to our solitary abode. Moved by profoundest pity for the poor creatures exposed to the fury of such a night, I flew to unbar the door. Three men, half exhausted by a battle with the whirlwind, rushed, dripping wet, under the offered shelter.

They were evidently hunters, as I easily told by their rifles and attire. Having lost their way in the storm, they had been guided to temporary shelter by our lighted windows. Two of them I saw, at once, were of the usual class to which those rough, weather-beaten men belong; but the third had a more civilized gleam in his dark eyes, and a something in his face that raised it, in intellectual expression, infinitely above those of his companions.

The glances of open and astonished admiration which these men cast on my innocent child's beauty, caused me at once to retire with her to the sleeping-room above.

God knows I have cause to remember that night for more than the terrible storm it produced!

Leaving the hunters to the good offices of Martin, we sought our beds, but from great excitement, found neither sleep nor rest. The morning broke, clear and golden. Before I came down, our visitors of the previous night had departed. I experienced a feeling of relief when I heard them leave the house, for never but once before were we disturbed by the intrusion of a white man, the frequent begging calls of the Indians, however, being nothing uncommon.

As if to present the greatest of contrasts, that spring day was as brightly clear as it was possible for day to

be. There remained no cloud in the sky, no spot on the earth, that was not all beauty and sunshine.

Not many days after this furious and memorable tempest, I had occasion to go to the settlement of ———, on one of my quarterly expeditions. I went alone, as was my habit.

After attending to the various duties that brought me there, I stopped at the post-office, so called probably from courtesy, for the mail-box occupied a corner of a log cabin. Among a half dozen letters, some from friends, and one from my lawyer, with its customary remittance, I found one from my sister.

It was written incoherently and brokenly. The hand-writing was scarcely legible; but a postscript from her husband, gave me more decisively the tidings that she was ill, and desired to see me.

"For," wrote she, "I know I have not long to live, and there is that on my mind, oh! my dear sister, which I *must* tell you, before my soul goes up to be judged before God! So will it be lightened of half the sin-load it will carry. O, Adzema, come to me! come and forgive!"

I was filled with amazement on reading these and other, to me, mysterious words. What had the pure-minded, happy Bianca done to me of wrong, that my forgiveness was necessary to the peace of her dying bed? Nothing, nothing, I was assured; and yet I felt

I must see her, for her husband wrote that her days were numbered. Notwithstanding my anxiety to fly to her sick-room, the thought of Azalie, alone in that western wild, rose prominently before me. How could I leave *her?* Yet I determined to go. Although I had never been separated from her for more than a day, my duty in this case was too imperative to be neglected.

Besides, what was there to fear beyond the Indians, and had not they always shown themselves friendly and peaceable in their almost weekly visits? Had not gifts of mutual satisfaction often passed between us?

I flung the thought of danger from me, and mounting my horse, rode as fast as possible over the weary thirty-five miles that lay between home and me, making up my mind on the way how to break the news to my child, and how best to pacify her when its full meaning dawned upon her.

The next day I set out. Azalie and Martin attended me as far as the horse-path that led to the open road; then, after many tears and embraces from my dear daughter, and some misgivings on my own part, I quickened Lady Jane's speed, (though the poor beast had not recovered the fatigue of the day before,) and soon found myself fairly on my journey.

Azalie's sobs were the last sounds I heard as I made a sudden turn in the wood-path.

Arriving at ———, I procured shelter and care for my horse until my return, and secured farther travelling accommodations to the open and settled part of the country. More than once my feelings so nearly overpowered me, that I was on the point of returning.

I would a thousand times that I had!

Travelling in those days was not what it is now. I think I was over ten days in reaching my sister's residence—a distance which, at the present time, could be gone over in as many hours.

All these details trouble my brain and spirit. I have tried to forget them for so many years, that to call them up now, seems like tearing open old wounds. But they *must* be written—*must* be sent out to the world as part of the experiences of a woman whose passions misled her.

I reached Bianca just at twilight on the tenth day. Her husband—a man of sterling worth—met me on the threshold of his costly city residence. He appeared glad, gratefully glad to see me.

"Thank God! you have come in time," he fervently ejaculated, as he led me to the room prepared for my reception. "For the last three hours we have minute-

ly expected her to breathe her last; but she said she could not, would not die till she had seen you."

When she heard of my arrival, Bianca sent for me with eager joy. Our meeting was affecting in the extreme, and to me most painfully so. As soon as it was over, scarcely giving herself time to recover from its agitating effects, she abruptly ordered her attendants from the apartment, and when her husband still lingered, with natural unwillingness, she begged him in wild impatience to leave her "alone with Adzema."

Her great beauty was not all gone. Her eyes had still their blue-sky lustre, her skin its white transparency. Sickness and the lapse of years had impaired, not robbed her of her charms.

Never can the intensity of her manner fade from my memory, as, half elevating herself on her wasted arm, she said, "Promise me, dear Adzema, promise me before heaven, you will forgive me, or I cannot tell you what is to be forgiven! Promise me, as if all heaven and its angels heard your vow."

"Dear Bianca, do not agitate yourself thus. I promise solemnly, although for me there exists no heaven. If all sisters had as little to forgive as I———"

"As you," she interrupted vehemently—"you have to forgive me the ruin of your soul. You have to forgive me sending you astray from that heaven which

only now you denied. Listen—quick, for my strength fails, and I cannot die with my unforgiven sin, and its fearful consequences. Oh! how it has haunted me ever since you took Azalie to Ohio, to educate her in ignorance of God and religion; for that, too, is on my soul. *You* know what it was to love him; *you* alone can tell the temptations that beset me. How could I help loving him—was not he good, and pure, and noble-minded? Was not he all that was—oh, God!—and yet he never loved *me!* I saw he worshipped *you* from the first; I exerted myself to entice him away from you. I was more beautiful than you; I tried to allure him by that beauty, and all the while, Adzema, I saw you returned his passion! Was I not base—was I not viler than the worms of the earth? An evil spirit took possession of me. When I became aware that his love for you was unchangeable, I declared in my degradation, that *you* should never marry him. I could not bear the thought of your some day becoming his wife. I poisoned his mind with falsehoods, and so adroitly did I manage, that he believed me as readily as he would have believed an angel. I told him you were already the betrothed of Ralph Carrington; and great joy was it to me then to see him suffer what I had so long suffered,—hopelsss, undying adoration! Oh! my sister, my only sister—you whom I have so wronged, what might have been your fate, had not I

stepped in your path to mar your happiness! I, surrounded with wealth, and you, learning the hard lessons of poverty in a youth made doubly wretched by care and trouble! Oh! listen, this is not all! Look at the consequences of my ignoble, unwomanly falsehoods! Look at the *consequences* more than the sin itself! Had you married Paul Rembrandt *then*, you would have lived for many years a life of affection and peace. I separated you for a worse fate than that of a mere passing love-disappointment. Your impetuous nature took fire. Your passion lay deeper than I thought, and, in very despite, you consented to unite yourself to Ralph. What has your life been since!—look at it, and see how it cries out against *me!* I have done it all; I have made you what you are! On *my* soul hangs the guilt of your Atheism, the monstrousness of your child's heathen ignorance. Oh, sister! Oh, Adzema, pardon me, forgive me for *his* sake—*I* loved him, too; cannot that make *some* pity for me in your breast? Look at me—see this wasted form—this pallid, fleshless face! They tell me it is disease that has made me thus, but I *know* it is agony of mind wearing out the body.

"You have been avenged! Like you, I married a man for whom I experienced nothing but indifference, and for years on years, added to the misery that that union has produced, I have carried in my heart a fire

of retribution for my crime against you, burning, burning, burning—oh, God! I feel it consuming me now!"

I was deeply agitated. As I looked at her, half sitting on the bed, with her eyes flashing forth an unearthly splendor, and her thin, white hands gesticulating violently before her, I began to weep. They were the first tears I had shed for many long months; and, as they flowed, seemed to give me an unmeasurable relief. A feeling of indignation oppressed me for one moment, this confession was so new, so unexpected; but the next, my good angel befriended me and bore it away. I thought only of Bianca and myself as little children, and then softening, I pressed my two arms gently round that fragile form, and told her to think of her sorrow no more, that I loved her well, and always should as long as my life lasted. A faint smile played over her lips, and then she softly uttered, "that is not enough, sister. Say to me the words, 'I forgive you, as I hope God will forgive me.'"

"There would be no virtue in them if I did, dear Bianca,—you know I do not believe in God."

Her face darkened again. "But you *must* believe in God!" Then more softly she urged—"Oh, do not spurn an immortality! Let me make all right that which I once made so wrong. I cannot go down to my grave in peace and leave you in such night as this!

Sister, dear sister, listen to my prayer, as you would to a voice from the dead."

Much more she said to me before she died. But there was a rock of iron in my bosom on which her voice beat as a wave upon a stony shore. Yet as her last troubled breath went from her, she blessed me.

With a chastened, but not a subdued spirit, I turned towards my western home. Henceforth my child was indeed to be my all; I had just buried the last of my kindred. Brooding gloomily over my desolate situation in the wide world, I pursued my way back again to solitude. There, in those wilds of nature, I still desired to bury myself and my misfortunes from all my kind. As I journeyed slowly along, half unconsciously, I reviewed my past life. Recalling its few joys and many griefs, I uttered a fervent hope that my child's fate might differ from mine. "Rather," I thought, "would I see her in her grave!"

It was early morning when I neared home. The sun was scarcely up, for in my impatience to see Azalie, I had ridden all night. Lady Jane drooped

her proud head in utter fatigue, as we emerged from the dark forest into the open fields that led to the log-cabin. Its doors and windows were still closed, and there was nothing astir without, that gave token of either Martin or Azalie having risen.

Bounding from my horse, I knocked loudly, and called to them to open to me.

It seemed an age (for I was half wild with eagerness), before Martin unbarred the door. Startled by his solemn air, and pale, haggard countenance, I pushed past him into the room. My child was not there to meet me; everything was silent as death. A presentiment of evil hovered over me, as I cried in agony—

"Oh! Martin, Martin, where is Azalie?"

He sank down fainting before me, and moaned out:

"Oh, my lady, she has gone and left you; she has gone and left you, and only God knows where!"

"Mother, dear, darling, beautiful mother," (thus the note run which my innocent child had left for me,) "do not weep, for I shall be home soon, and then we will be happier than we have ever been before. Philip loves me so much, dear mother, that he says he will come and live with us always, and love you and dear

old Martin just as I do. And I would not have gone away at all, only he said I should be here again almost as soon as you. Do you remember that awful storm just before you went away?

"That was when Philip Randel first saw me, and he says he loved me even then. We have met often in the woods since, sometimes down by the brook, and sometimes near the old blasted cedars. He did not like to come to the cabin, because he thought perhaps Martin would not like it,—I do not know *why* though,—I am sure Martin could not help liking *him*. I go away, dear mother, to return again very, very soon.

"O do not be displeased with me. I *cannot* but love him; and if I do, Philip says I should be willing to marry him. And so I am.

"O, darling mother, do not feel badly about me, *you* will love him too, when we come back to you."

Days and weeks rolled away; to me they passed in a whirlwind of agony, for they brought no tidings of my lost child. My punishment was indeed greater than I could bear. The tortures of the Inquisition were nothing to those I endured in my broken-hearted suspense.

I caused the country to be scoured in all directions by the Indians, dazzling them with promises of great rewards in return for the least news of my daughter

and her destroyer, for such was my terrible conviction. I offered all I possessed for the discovery of her abode. In vain. The wily hunter had hidden her too securely or too far away for effort of mine to reach her. I know not how my hand can write of this man so calmly,—*man*, are fiends *men?*

I never heard if it was as my mother's heart feared. I never knew the history of her wrongs, nor whither she went. But I *do* know, and the knowledge is awful with significance, that before the day of her flight reached its anniversary, she returned to her home in the bosom of that snow-covered wild, and in the pitiless wintry night-time died upon the threshold of its barred door. Died of cold, exhaustion and hunger! Died, oh God! in blind ignorance of Thee! Died to earth, and died to heaven!

Death alienated me from God, and death returned me to Him. In that time of fearful affliction, He opened my eyes to my crime. There came upon me the sudden consciousness of a heavy guilt. I felt I had destroyed an immortal spirit. Too late, the enormity of my wickedness dawned upon me. Appalled by the blackness of its reality, I fell upon my knees unto Him whom I had outraged, and prayed for mercy; mercy for my dead child—mercy for myself!

All this was years ago. A flourishing town now stands over the spot where we made Azalie's forest-grave.

Religion has taught me resignation, although time has but deepened my remorse. By humble and holier deeds than those here chronicled, I strive to atone for that past, whose phantom memories haunt me forever.

I have given up solitude. Amid city life, surrounded by blessed human faces, I am gradually approaching my end. In my old age, God has led me from the dangers of that faith whose strength lies in its imaginative fascinations, to that One Religon of which He is the Head and All. When I close my weary eyes upon this world, may it be my safety for eternity!

But one remnant of the faith of my youth do I still cherish. It is a solemn belief in the efficacy of Prayer for the Dead.

I have finished. I trust that this brief STORY OF A LIFE may go forth, winged with a blessing from heaven, and be productive of unbounded good.

SYBIL RIVERS.

"Save me from the past, good angel,
This is all I ask of thee!"

Alice Carey.

"Thy voice is on the rolling air;
I heard Thee where the waters run;
Thou standest in the rising sun,
And in the setting thou art fair."

Tennyson.

On the yellow sands of the New-Jersey shores stood one day a young girl watching the progress of a steamship that was putting out to sea. Her gaze was fastened steadfastly upon it, as on an object of uncommon interest, and she shaded her eyes with her hands that she might behold it more clearly.

Fainter and fainter grew the outlines of the vessel, fading gradually away, until it was lost upon the vast reach of water, and vanished in the distance.

Then the girl threw herself wildly on the wet sand, and wept. "Gone," she cried, "gone away forever —gone, and my very life with him! Oh, Ormon Morton, God alone knows the wealth of love I bear you!"

She rose up, and tearing a single letter from her bosom, rent it in fragments, and scattered them to the winds and waves. Her hat had fallen off, and her black hair blew in disordered masses over her face, which, if not beautiful, was by no means an uninteresting one. As the torn paper floated around her in the breeze, she smote her breast fiercely, and murmured—

"So should my unknown, unpaid love perish too! I cannot, I ought not live in such humiliation,—I *must* become without reproach in my own eyes. I will go away,—I will find employment where association cannot lend aid to memories bitter enough in themselves. Any where—any where but *here!*

She stooped to reach her crumbled bonnet, and with slow steps, and bent, thoughtful head, walked up the sloping shore to the green fields beyond.

Scarcely was she gone, when, from a clustering groop of fir trees under the edge of the bank, emerged the figure of a man. As he neared where the young girl had stood, he turned to look after her retreating form, and when a bend in the path hid her from his eyes, he cried in triumph—

"Sybil—Sybil Rivers! as you have spurned *my* love, so will I find means to humble you by your own!

THREE years passed.

"There they come!—there they come!" was the joyful cry that arose from the Oaks (a pretty villa on the banks of the Hudson), as, at the close of a bright day, a carriage broke to view from a rolling cloud of dust on one of the adjacent roads.

The Colonel shouted to Jacob to be ready to open the gates. Mrs. Morgan ran to take a last peep at the rooms prepared for her guests, and Miss Rose danced, and flitted about the piazza, in delighted expectation.

A moment more, and the great gates were thrown back, and the carriage rolled up the avenue.

Then ensued greetings, inquiries, and embraces, which I will not attempt to describe.

It was the arrival of Mrs. Morton, and her daughter Silvia, that we have just chronicled. Mrs. Morgan and Mrs. Morton were sisters. Each had been heiresses and belles in their youth, and since their respective marriages had never met.

Mrs. Morgan was the wife of a Northern gentleman of education and fortune, and Mrs. Morton the widow of a Southern planter.

Shortly after the settlement of her husband's entangled affairs, Mrs. Morton had decided to take up her residence, for some little time, in Colonel Morgan's family. Rose and Silvia had never seen each other. Their first kiss of cousinship was given on the piazza

of the Oaks, Colonel Morgan's country-seat. Though in different styles, the two girls were remarkably alike. They were nearly of the same age. Rose was a little jetty beauty, with flashing black eyes, glossy raven curls, and the air and complexion of an Egyptian princess, petite and plump though she was. Silvia had a more delicate frame than her cousin, more langour in her brown eyes, more simplicity in her general appearance. She was rather slenderly formed, and somewhat German in expression, her grandfather having come from that people. Rose was good-natured, merry and light-hearted; Silvia, quiet and retired. Despite their many contrasts, no one could mistake the likeness between them. Both were only daughters.

Rose's welcome to her cousin was the acme of cordiality. She put her little brown arms around Silvia's neck, and nearly smothered her with caresses. Silvia took this reception very passively. She kissed her cousin in return on one of her rosy cheeks, and calmly disengaging herself from the embrace of those pretty arms, turned to greet her aunt and the Colonel.

The meeting between the two sisters was touching to look upon. Their youth had departed, their beauty had faded, children had been born, and death had bereaved them since last they were together. The tears of the good ladies flowed freely, as they were again pressed in each other's arms.

Colonel Morgan was one of those men who hate to look upon the tears of women. His mind was not quite fine enough to understand them, and his sunny, careless humor, too antagonistic to any such sorrowful proceeding to countenance them. In the present instance, he speedily put an end to them, by suddenly clasping his wife and sister-in-law tightly around the waist, an arm for each, and vowing to kiss them till their weeping ceased. Now, the Colonel wore a huge moustache, the application of which, on the cheek, was by no means agreeable; as his sister-in-law had already discovered this fact, she wisely dried her tears.

Shortly afterward Mrs. Morgan led the way to the rooms prepared for her visitors. They were pleasant and retired, adjoined one another, and were furnished with tasteful, costly elegance. The window-curtains were of the richest and rarest fabrics, veiling landscapes, even richer and rarer still; while the furniture, although new, was in choice antique patterns, elaborately carved and inlaid; the walls were hung with tapestry.

Mrs. Morgan remembered something of her sister's regal tastes in the days of their youth; she had spared neither time nor expense in fitting up these rooms for her and her daughter. It had been a labor of love.

As the group of ladies entered, a young person, who was arranging a vase of flowers in one of the broad window-sills, advanced, and was introduced by Mrs. Morgan as,

"My daughter's friend and governess."

She was tall, by no means handsome, but of an erect and *distingué* carriage, that well supplied the place of mere beauty of face. She bowed slightly, but rather proudly, and left the apartment.

Rose assisted her cousin to change her travelling attire, chatting all the while at the full speed of her tongue—a brilliantly witty one it chanced to be just at that time—and then the bell signalled tea.

"Silvia," asked Rose about a week after the arrival at the Oaks, "what do you say to a quiet ride down to Meadowside this afternoon. I can order the horses this minute if you like. Shall I?"

Silvia slowly raised her brown eyes from the work on her lap, and said, without the slightest display of pleasurable animation—

"I should like to go;" and Rose went to bespeak the horses, gaily singing, as she went,

"I love nobody,
Nobody loves me"

When her cousin returned, Silvia begged pardon for her thoughtlessness in not remembering she had given away her riding habit, on leaving Florida, and coldly hoped to be forgiven for occasioning the unnecessary trouble of ordering the horse.

"But Miss Rivers will lend you her habit. Will you not, Sybil?" asked Rose, disappointed.

"Certainly," replied her governess, with that air of calm good-breeding, which Silvia had more than once remarked—"will you allow me to get it for you, Miss Morton? Our figures are something alike; I am quite sure it will fit you."

Rose was just in the act of triumphantly carrying off her cousin *nolens volens*, when, to her surprise, Silvia drew herself up haughtily, and said—

"Excuse me, I cannot accompany you."

A light dawned on Rose. She saw her cousin in a new phase of character. She was proud.

Rather than stoop to borrow a dress of her cousin's *governess*, a creature generally looked down upon at the South as a betweenity, vibrating above the slave, and below the housekeeper, Silvia Morton determined to forego her ride.

And she did.

Rose's tender eyes opened to their full extent. A feeling of indignation choked her for a moment, but she very sensibly conquered it; took no farther notice

of Silvia's refusal, and going up to her governess, asked if *she* would accompany her to Meadowside.

Miss Rivers, of course, had felt the slight. Very collectively, yet, at the same time, with a half smile of intelligence at her pupil's open-hearted face, she declined going. Rose, however, was not to be thwarted a second time; besides, she wanted the malicious satisfaction of entreating her governess before Silvia, whom she remembered she had not urged at all.

Miss Rivers yielded. I know not how it happened, for she was generally very firm in adhering to a first determination.

They were soon equipped, governess and pupil, each in black cloth habits and straw riding-hats, trimmed with long tresses of narrow scarlet ribbon, that had the effect of plumes, without their heaviness. They were both young, both striking looking, and both practiced and self-possessed horsewomen.

Rose Morgan was much attached to this governess of hers. There was not enough difference in their ages to mar the similarity of their tastes and pursuits; Miss Rivers being about twenty-six, and her pupil some seven or eight years younger. There existed perfect harmony between them; the influence of the governess over the student was by no means weakened as a consequence of their sisterly intercourse.

Sybil Rivers was poor and proud. Early left an

orphan, she had been bred for the state in life which she then occupied. She appreciated it and herself; she felt herself to be a true lady, notwithstanding her position, and not unfrequently encountered those whose fortunes were greatly superior to her own, on whom she looked down in an intellectual point of view. This fact served to increase the hauteur which her circumstances engendered. No one was able to say, however, that Sybil Rivers over-stepped the boundaries of her position.

She was perfectly educated.

Followed by Jacob, the coachman, the two young ladies set out on their ride. Rose had a few purchases to make in the village, and one or two calls on some of her many "dear, dear friends."

"How do you like Silvia?" she abruptly asked Miss Rivers, as they rode along the pleasant, rural highway, overshadowed by venerable trees.

"Very well," was the brief answer. It surprised Rose, because she knew her governess never dissimulated.

"And why, Sybil? how can you like her after such treatment as you received from her?"

"My dear," responded Miss Rivers, laughing, "I like her for the very anti-democracy she displays towards me. I like her because she resembles myself; I am far from being democratic in my ideas. We are proud alike.

"I do not like her at all!" cried Rose, impulsively. "Before she came I thought I should love her, and so I might if she had allowed me; but I cannot bear these cold, calculating creatures, that never speak a word, without weighing it in their minds for five minutes. And as for her pride, Sybil, *I* do not dignify it by the name, it is merely a combination of vanity and disdain. Now acknowledge, don't you think her disdainful?"

"Yes, rather; but then she is so beautiful, it sits well upon her."

"Mother says she is engaged, although she has not herself honored me with her confidence. Her *fiancé*, and her brother, Ormon, are expected to join them very soon."

Rose dropped her bridle, clapped her hands, and laughed.

Miss Rivers was too much accustomed to such unexpected ebullitions to be much astonished. She merely turned her stately head, half smiled at the pretty fairy at her side, and inquired what was the subject of her merriment.

"Oh," cried Rose, "I was just thinking of the manner in which Silvia will probably receive her lover. There came a picture before me of two dignified people shaking hands very calmly and coldly, and saying nothing in particular. Oh, Sybil! what a *splendid*

thing it must be to have a real earnest, honest lover! When *I* get one such, I'll not keep it a secret, you may be sure, like my cousin,—oh no. I'll post the fact up at all the corners of the streets, and let everybody see I am not the least bit ashamed!"

Sybil laughed, and said she doubted not she would live to change her mind.

"No, indeed," cried Rose, indignantly, "never."

"Yes you will, my dear," remarked Miss Rivers, "*I* have. I used to think just like you when I was your age."

"You do not mean to say *you* have ever been in love," demanded Rose, with a look of mock wonder. "I can very easily imagine people loving *you*, but as for the condescension of a return on your part, I don't believe a word of it. Why the very way you *look* at men shows you consider them an inferior race. I suppose there is not the least bit of use in insinuating that I should like to know something of your heart affairs?"

"No, not the least use," laughed Sybil. "Do you think I want the whole world to hear the news? When I do, I will tell you. Rose, you are a veritable magpie."

But Rose heard not the reproof. A side road disclosing some acquaintances, she had cantered away to meet them.

Sybil looked after her, and sighed. There was something so fresh, so guileless about her pupil, that she could not but remark the contrast between them, and that with an inward prayer that, on Rose's part, it might never be less.

Sybil Rivers *had* loved, loved with a sincerity, an intensity, far beyond Rose Morgan's comprehension. But it was a silent love, unknown even to its object.

Rose soon parted from her friends, and returned with an added color on her cheeks, and a smile upon her lips.

"Bell Riker's pic-nic is decided at last, Sybil. She and Gilbert were just going to the Oaks, with invitations for Silvia and us. I am glad of *anything* to vary the monotony of this stupid country life. The pic-nic is for to-morrow evening. Shall you go?"

"I think so; although unlike you, I do not need it as a variety in this 'stupid country life.' I was intended for a country girl, I think."

"Whereas *I* was born for the city, and find myself compelled to pass one half the year in this horrid, dusty,—good gracious, Sybil, who was that?"

Miss Rivers concluded her bow to a gentleman who had paused to claim it as he rode by, and then answered—

"An old acquaintance of mine,—a Mr. Allandorph."

"*Ciel*, what eyes! An old *lover*, did you say, Sybil?"

But Sybil was too busy whipping down an apple from a branch that hung over the road, to hear the question.

The distance from the Oaks to Meadowside was some four or five miles. An unrivalled road for a ride it was, too, even as planking, and commanding views of more than common loveliness,—views of wood and mountain, river and valley. The sun grew near sitting, and the extreme heat of the day was beginning to be relieved by the early cool of coming twilight.

Touching up their horses, the two girls hastened on to Meadowside, followed closely by Jacob, who had too poor an opinion of "the ridin' of wimmin," to trust his young mistress out of sight for one instant. Reaching the village, Rose made her purchases, and they turned homeward. It was then too late to make the intended calls, and from the effects of disappointment Rose was very quiet all the way. Miss Rivers was silent too, not, however, like Rose, from vexation; her nobler nature was subdued by the solemn beauty of the scene, and of the deepening twilight.

It was late when they reached the Oaks. The stars were out, and the dews falling heavily.

As Rose and her governess passed up the wide staircase to don their usual evening dresses, they saw through the open doors that the family was already at

tea, and Rose's quick orbs noted in an instant the presence of a stranger at the table.

Rose was a little of a coquette. She took especial pains with her toilet that night, and succeeded in looking as fresh and pretty as possible. Every one knows there is nothing like an *object* as incentive for exertion. Rose believed that the gentleman of whom she had caught a glimpse in the tea-room, was either the brother or lover of Silvia Morton,—in both cases a good impression was desirable. She knew that in black she appeared to more advantage than in colors, so she attired herself in a black barège, with a glossy under-skirt of white silk, and in her curls placed some unearthly flowers, whose pendant scarlet tendrils dallied over her bare shoulders. Very fantastic, but very pretty, looked Rose Morgan as she descended to the tea-room.

Miss Rivers did not take the same time or pains with her attire as her pupil, for Rose found her at the table as she entered, and what was more, she was conversing with the visitor quite at her ease. By the light of the wax candles, Rose saw at a glance that he was no other than the gentleman they encountered during their ride.

Mrs. Morgan introduced him as the Reverend John Allandorph. Rose and he exchanged bows, and the

conversation, that had been interrupted by her entrance, was resumed.

The Reverend Mr. Allandorph was very handsome. Many other people had thought so before Rose Morgan. He was rather portly in appearance, about thirty-five or six years of age, and anything but clerical-looking, that is to say, he neither wore a white neckerchief, nor, affecting the mannerisms of the profession, crossed his hands when they were not otherwise occupied.

He and the Colonel got on admirably together. They had travelled over the same ground, read the same books, and met the same people. Much to Rose's chagrin, they monopolized the whole conversation with discussions on foreign countries, and the literature belonging to them. Just as they were leaving the table, however, a well-turned compliment, on the fearlessness and style of her own and Miss Rivers' riding, made ample amends for previous neglect.

In the drawing-room the evening passed delightfully. Colonel Morgan was sincerely hospitable; his house was always open; his purse and table ever ready. He was one of those men who divide all their happiness with their families, and do not seek for pleasures abroad which are not shareable with the home circle. Blessings on all such men, say I!

Silvia was very still. Generally quiet, this night

she was unusually so. She did not join in the music of the evening, nor indeed did she seem even to listen to Rose's or Miss Rivers' brilliant and effective playing.

It seemed as though all her faculties had one centre, and that was the Reverend John Allandorph. Wherever he moved, her eyes followed him in dreamy abstraction.

Silvia Morton was naturally of an affectionate disposition, but the circumstances of her early life had combined to make her cold, suspicious and haughty.

Her father had been the cause of much sorrow to his family. He was originally a gay, generous man, and evil associations had turned that generosity, that cheerfulness of disposition, into wrong.

He perished miserably, a *roué* and drunkard, leaving his wretched wife to rejoice at a release from her own living death. Silvia's childhood had been witness of terrible scenes. Her youth was crushed from her,—she was a woman in feeling when an infant in years. Yet, though outwardly cold, she possessed a capacity for strong and passionate attachment. Mr. Allandorph she had loved very deeply for many months before he offered her his hand, and since, her affection for him had grown like a portion of her life. He was some fourteen or fifteen years her elder—she venera-

ted him for his profession, years and intellect, as much as she worshipped him as her lover.

Notwithstanding the neglected state of Mr. Morton's affairs at the time of his death, Silvia was an heiress. When the final settlements were made, much of his former fortune was unexpectedly found to remain to his widow and children, and a portion of it was expressly willed by him to his daughter.

"Silvia," asked Rose, "did you know Miss Rivers and Mr. Allandorph had met before?"

Poor Rose could not have asked a question with more innocence, yet its effect on her cousin was startling. She glanced at the piano, where sat Sybil dallying with the white keys, while talking earnestly to Mr. Allandorph, who half bent over her to catch what she said the more distinctly. There was a slight frown on Miss Rivers' face, and a compression about the lips that told she was laboring under great excitement; whilst Mr. Allandorph's expression was that of half-concealed triumph.

Rose caught her cousin's earnest gaze riveted upon them, and turned to look. Even she was surprised by what she saw, and particularly as she knew Sybil's habits of uncommon self-control. It was evident the subject of the conversation must be of great interest to both, and certainly it signified a previous familiarity of acquaintance.

Neither of the cousins spoke. At length an irresistible impulse seized Silvia; half fiercely, she turned to Rose, and demanded—

"What do you mean by that? If you dare to insinuate that he is, or has ever been, the lover of that woman ——"

A deadly paleness overspread her features. She sank into a chair without finishing her sentence.

Rose's tender little heart was touched in an instant by such evident suffering. The harsh words were forgotten; she put her arm around her cousin's waist, and said, caressingly,—

"What a foolish little piece you are, Silvia; I did not say or insinuate anything of the kind. Don't shiver so, for mercy's sake; you will have every one around you."

Silvia scarcely heard the sound of her voice. Her gaze was again chained to the piano-forte. "It *cannot* be," she articulated. "Love *her!* Allandorph love a *poor governess!* Never!"

She pressed her hands suddenly over her heart, as though some agonizing throe had riven her very being. She seemed unconscious that Rose was at her side, and that her unguarded words were heard. A strange fire flashed from her beautiful eyes, as she groaned half inaudibly, and with a curl of more than habitual pride on her lips,—

"If he has loved *her*, he shall not love *me*, so help me heaven!"

Just then a servant entered with a tray of refreshments, and placed it on the table by which Silvia and Rose stood. Immediately afterwards, Colonel Morgan came towards it with Mr. Allandorph to make punch. There was no retreating for the moment; and Rose seeing her cousin was utterly unfitted for conversation, kindly shielded her from it, by taking a prominent and playful part in the punch-making, laughing and talking merrily as she did so, to which two things little Rose was by no means averse at any time. Silvia's agitated countenance passed unobserved. At the first favorable moment she rose, and pleading a throbbing headache to Mrs. Morgan, withdrew quietly to the silence of her own room.

Strong as agony were the sensations warring in that young girl's bosom. Passionate love, and stern, unyielding pride battled in deadly contest,—love for the mastery of pride, pride for the overthrow of love.

The coldest people outwardly are sometimes those who *feel* the most. The bare suspicion of her lover having wooed another, and that other so beneath him in rank, filled her with acute wretchedness. But it was more a pride-grief than a love-grief. She had suspected something of the kind before Rose's very natural question caused her to frame it in words.

Not a tear escaped the haughty girl. She flung herself on her couch, and tried to repress even the deep-drawn sighs that forced their way between her clenched teeth.

Ah, what a humiliation it was, even to *imagine* that beautiful, wealthy, young, as she was,—she loved one who, in her patrician opinion, had abased himself! She felt as though she could have torn her heart out and trampled it beneath her feet, the humiliation was so galling.

When Rose Morgan retired for the night, her loving heart was full of trouble. She knew her friend too well to suspect her of duplicity towards Silvia, and she saw that as long as she was unwarned of the state of Silvia's mind, she would probably continue to wound her by frequent displays of intimacy with Mr. John Allandorph, as she had been witness of that night. Yet Rose dreaded to annoy Miss Rivers, even by a mere hint, of the misery she was causing Silvia. It seemed to her like attacking her friend's integrity; at all events, the information was calculated to destroy her comfort and independence while Silvia remained with them, and her visit at the Oaks was scarcely begun. What should she do? She set her wise young head to thinking, bit her little pink finger-nails very energetically, and tried to come to some conclusion.

Should she wound Sybil's feelings, and save Silvia's, or let things progress as they would?

She decided on the former course, and with her usually bright face a perfect picture of forlorn distress, took her way, on tip-toe, across the corridor, to Miss Rivers' sleeping-room.

She tapped very softly on the door, that she might not disturb the rest of the family; and with a trepidation very unlike her usual way of rushing in helter-skelter, waited for Sybil to say, "come in."

There was silence for a few moments, and then the door opened. Sybil was partially undressed, and had stopped to put her feet in her slippers, and throw a shawl over her fine shoulders. She was evidently surprised to see no one but Rose.

"Oh, Sybil," began Rose, "I am *so* sorry."

"Sorry? What about,—has anything happened,—are you sick, Rose, dear?"

"Oh, no. I want to tell you something."

"Very well, what is it? Has your bird escaped, or have you spoiled your pretty barège, and its white silk *jupe?*"

"Oh please don't laugh. If you only knew, Sybil!"

"How can I know, if you will not tell me!"

"Well, then, it's about *you.*"

"About me? What have I been doing, pray, to make

you look so dismally,—for all the world like a kitten just revived from drowning. Come, tell me, Rose."

"Oh, Sybil, do be serious."

"I am serious,—serious as an owl."

Rose could not stand it any longer. She went to the broad window-sill, threw herself on it, and began to cry. Miss Rivers was now really alarmed, and tenderly tried to soothe her.

"Oh, Sybil," Rose sobbed out at intervals, "why did you talk so to Mr. Allandorph to-night."

"What did we say,—did any one hear us?" demanded Miss Rivers, quickly—her whole manner changing in an instant.

"No," answered Rose, wiping her eyes, "nobody heard you, but *everybody* saw you; and Silvia, oh! she's just as mad as fury at you!"

"Why?" asked Sybil, in a tone of deep, but half-suppressed interest.

"Oh! you won't be angry, Sybil, if I tell you?"

"Why should I, my poor child. I am not *quite* an ogress, I believe," and she kissed her softly.

"You know Silvia is very proud, Sybil, and I believe—that is, I think—she imagines Mr. Allandorph has been a lover of yours. She was half frantic to-night, when she saw you talking together over the piano, and she said, oh! Sybil, she said, that if ever he had loved *you*, he should not love *her!*"

"Well, Rose?"

"And, Sybil, I don't believe you love him a bit; Indeed, I do not. But Silvia is so unhappy, and looked *so* wild, that I thought I must tell you, and ask you not to talk much with Mr. Allandorph in her presence. She was almost delirious."

"Poor, poor child," said Sybil, abstractedly.—"Rose?"

"Yes."

"I am in great trouble, will you aid me?"

Rose looked surprised, but said instantly,—

"Indeed I will, with all my heart."

"And you will never mention what I tell you?"

Rose brightened amazingly.

"No, indeed, never, *never!*"

The scarlet shawl on Sybil's shoulders half drooped from them, her long dark hair falling over it and her white neck in unbound profusion. Looking very pale, and with her eyes on the ground, Sybil said,—

"Rose, John Allandorph, Reverend as he is, is a bad and wicked man. He is guilty of gross crimes, and has been expelled from his church. He is well aware that I know this—I knew it long ago. He did not expect to see me here to-night, nor did I hear until to-night that he was engaged to your cousin.

"Rose, that man possesses a secret of mine, with the disclosures of which, he has dared this day to threaten

me, if I reveal his real reputation either to your family or the Mortons. That secret I would die rather than have known,—it is at once my glory and my shame; and yet, I *must* warn your cousin and her mother of this man. Oh, Rose! what can I, what ought I to do?"

Rose was silent.

"Allandorph is a brilliantly intellectual man, he can charm an angel into delusion. It is no wonder that your cousin loves him."

"And you think, Sybil, he will positively reveal your secret if you expose him?"

"Yes, certainly,—he is possessed of the worst passions on earth. He will not hesitate an instant. Oh! it would *kill* me to have that known!"

All the good in Rose's woman's nature was now thoroughly awakened; softly she whispered,—

"My dear friend, confide in me. Let me share your cruel, cruel position; let me help you if I can."

Miss Rivers bowed her face upon her hands, and a crimson tide mantled to her temples.

"I cannot, I cannot; the shame is too great."

"Have you ever loved Allandorph, Sybil?" asked Rose, after a pause.

Sybil raised her hand with indignant majesty. "Allandorph!—*love* that hypocritical monster? *Never!*"

Rose was now distressed doubly. She knew not how to advise her friend to act. All she could do was

to offer consolation, and try to infuse a faith into her mind that all would some time come right.

"Let us hope," she said tenderly, "that Silvia will of herself discover the evil in this man—will of herself discard him; if so, you forfeit nothing. I beg of you not to let all this afflict you too much. It is growing late. I will leave you to try and still yourself. Sleep away your fears for the safety of your secret, whatever it may be, dear, dear Sybil."

She kissed her, and went away as noiselessly as she had come.

When she was gone, Miss Rivers threw up the window and leaned out. Everything was still as death. Clouds obscured both moon and stars; all space was filled with a beautiful, mournful grey. There were lights from the night-boats, gleaming up and down the Hudson; they attracted her attention to that dark, rapid river, and she longed to quench her sense of burning shame in its waters.

"Death, peace, oblivion," she murmured; and pressing her hot head on her arms crossed on the sill, wept herself, childlike, into an uneasy slumber.

"Who is going to the Riker's pic-nic to-night?" asked Mrs. Morgan, the next morning, at breakfast.

"I am, for one," responded Rose, pausing, in buttering her toast, to cast a look of entreaty at Miss Rivers.

"And who else," said Mrs. Morgan, glancing around the table,—"you, Silvia?"

"I suppose so," answered Silvia, with an air of indifference.

Sybil was silent.

"What pic-nic is it," said Mr. Allandorph. "Will any of you fair ladies smuggle me in as escort?"

"Cousin Silvia will, I have no doubt," half laughed Rose; "as for Miss Rivers and myself, we are already provided with the article. I despatched Jacob down to Mr. Wall, with a note this very morning, and have just received his acceptance, for rain or shine, for better or worse."

"My dear Rose, I hope you have not mentioned my name in that important document, have you?" said Sybil, listlessly. "I do not feel like going to-night. I really am not well."

"Just as if you do not know it will do you good," exclaimed Rose, making with her spoon a shockingly intimidating gesture at her governess from behind Mr. Allandorph. "Ever since the flood, pic-nics have been recommended as sovereign remedies for ill-health."

"And particularly *night* pic-nics," remarked Mrs. Morton, who had her own reasons for desiring Sybil's plea to be accepted. "The damp evening air is a

well-known health-giver. It never yet caused rheumatism, fevers, colds ——"

"Now, aunt," interrupted Rose, in real despair, "I think that is scarcely kind. Sybil was just smiling on me, and you have done away with all the good of my persuasion. However, for *my* sake, she will not care for such trifling things as fevers and rheumatism,—is it not so, Sybil? Don't say 'no.'"

She did not say "no," but smiled, and shook her head gently.

"Oh! we must all go," cried Mr. Allandorph. "We will take great care of you, Miss Rivers. Shall you not accompany us?"

He darted a quick, but meaning glance upon her face. Sybil shivered slightly, and turning to Rose, said, "she might possibly change her decision if she became no worse."

And, in the heart of Silvia Morton, that look was treasured up as a terrible link in the chain of her suspicions.

Rose was in the midst of an interminable jumble about Sybil's being obliging for *once* in her life, when her father broke in upon her, by asking Mr. Allandorph if he had read Schiller's "Song of the Bell."

"A long while ago. I scarcely remember it, especially as I read it in the original, and have now nearly

forgotten the language. How do you like it, Colonel?"

"Like it! I do not like it at all—I love it, although I have merely read translations. It is perfect in its way. I happen to know something of the circumstances under which it was written, and that gives it a double interest. Have you ever heard the story?"

Mr. Allandorph said he had not.

"It appears," began the Colonel, vigorously carving a beefsteak, "that Schiller was one day ——"

"Was one day," repeated Mr. Allandorph, as the Colonel made a long pause; but the tale of Schiller's inspiration was to remain unuttered. Colonel Morgan sat directly opposite the door, and as he accidentally glanced that way, his attention was attracted by seeing the white figure of a woman flit through the hall. It was like none of the servants, and hastily looking around, he saw that all the ladies of the family were present. As he rose to ascertain the object of so strange an intrusion, Jacob, the coachman, staggered into the room, his rough Irish visage working with affright, and his eyes rolling from side to side.

"Oh Kernel! Kernel!" he cried loudly, "that I should av lived to see this day!" and dropping on his knees, Jacob began rapidly, and in great terror—

"Now I lay me down to slape,
I pray the Lord me sowl to kape—"

"What do you mean, you Irish rascal?" thundered Colonel Morgan, in a rage. "Get up this minute, and cease making a booby of yourself. What's the matter with you?"

But Jacob continued on his knees, rocking himself to and fro, and crying—

"Oh Lord! oh Lord! that I av lived to see this day."

Some of the ladies laughed, and all with a slight, but unaccountable sensation of fear, grouped themselves together.

Colonel Morgan was very easily excited. He strode up to Jacob, and swore to kick him out of the room if he did not say at once what had happened.

"Well, yer honor, if yer plaze," cried Jacob, a little subdued at the threat, "if ye'll jist kape quiet a bit, I'll till ye. Shure, yer honor, it wasn't me own fault—it was not of me own mind I wint and see *sich* sights. By the Blissed Virgin, I till ye, I've seen *a ghost*, a rale *live* ghost! Ben't *that* enough to make a dacent man say his prayers shure?"

But the Colonel did not seem at all mollified. He uttered not a word of what he himself had seen, however, but abruptly went to search the house, leaving Jacob trembling, groaning, and talking by turns.

"Oh, yer honor," he said, addressing himself to Mr. Allandorph, "Shure 'tisn't the fust, nor the second

time, I've bin bothered wid a sight of the ghost this very day,—och! that I should meet the unlucky crather at all, at all! Shure, yer honor, 'twas white as death, and jist kinder whisked apast me, makin' its onairthly arms move over its head *so*, yer honor. Och, ye would have know'd it was a ghost by me knase knockin' together. The fust time I see it, was whin I took Miss Rose's lether (God bliss her swate face!) down to the village. Shure, as I wint apast the bend at 'Squire Dutton's, I see somthin' white, a gleamin' in the bushes at one side the road, and jist as bould as a lion, I marched up to it, and sez I, Jacob Maloney, sez I, ye must see what *that* be; so, yer honor, I parted the bushes and looked in, and, oh Lord, Mr. Allandorph, do ye b'lave there was the ugly crather a shakin' its arms like mad, right 'fore me face. I didn't stop, yer honor, to see what it wanted, but off I wint, as fast as me two legs could carry me. Och! whin I cam back, *there it was still*, only plainer, and it rolled its big eyes *awful*."

"Pooh, pooh, Jacob," said Mrs. Morgan kindly, "you must not believe in ghosts. There never was such a thing in the world. Go down to the kitchen, and ask Nancy for your breakfast. This travelling on an empty stomach has made you sick."

"Stoomic!" ejaculated Jacob, disdainfully, as he moved towards the door, "shure, its not me stoomic I

see wid, onyhow. Faith, Mrs. Morgan, the sperit is in the house this very minute."

Mrs. Morton and Rose half shrieked.

"Yis, me ladies," continued Jacob, looking gratified at the sympathy he was beginning to create—"yis, me swate ladies, I've jist seen the ugly crather in the intry, when I cam in, and it whisked up stairs like lightnin'. Shure ye'll b'lieve me now, whin it is in the house wid ye, and the Colonel a lookin' afther it. Stoomic!"

Jacob indignantly left the room, followed rather hurriedly by Mr. Allandorph.

"Good gracious, what can it all mean?" uttered Rose, faintly.

"Rose," said Miss Rivers, "do not be foolish. You are as white as Jacob's ghost itself."

"Well, father, what on earth is the matter?" exclaimed Rose, as Colonel Morgan returned.

"Matter, child! nothing, nothing. Jacob has taken a drop too much on the way to Meadowside, that is all. There isn't a trace of anybody, or thing, to be found in the house. Confound the rascal, with his cock-and-bull stories."

And the confusion the circumstance had caused died away, without the Colonel mentioning his own evidence on the subject.

The morning was very beautiful, (one of those cool

and balmy mornings so refreshing in the heat of summer,) and gave every token of a clear and moonlight night.

Mr. Ormon Morton was expected to arrive sometime that day at the Oaks—his mother and sister were in consequence in a very excited state of mind. It was three years since Mrs. Morton had held this son in her arms—three years since she had looked upon his beloved face. He had arrived two days before from Europe, where he had gone for his health, and whence he had been recalled by the news of his father's death.

"Ormon is coming,—he is coming *to-day*," was the only burden of conversation at the Oaks.

Heart-sick, and well nigh despairing, that morning passed, to Sybil Rivers, like an eternity of misery.

There was a mighty shame tugging at her bosom. It devoured her peace—it corroded her life.

She sought her own room, and flinging herself on her bed, tried to sleep, that she might thus escape from her rebuking thoughts.

But the effort was in vain! The words, "*Orman is coming to-day*," rang through her brain, and put slumber afar from her eyes.

"He will soon know all," she moaned, "*all*—ALL. He will hear from Allandorph, of my love my long-enduring, *unasked* love, for him,—for I *must* brave this

man's threats—I must save *his* sister. Heaven alone knows how bitter is this trial,—how like gall and wormwood is my threatened dishonor!"

A slight movement of one of the scarlet brocade window-curtains attracted Sybil's attention. She paused, looked towards it; but, seeing nothing, resumed her train of forlorn thought.

"Why! oh why do I love this man," she asked herself, wildly,—"why should I cling to the hope of his love? He knows not my own, and when he does, he will despise, but never return it! Why should I love him, when station, wealth, and pride of family, stand between us, like barriers of ice? I am poor,—*he* is rich and haughty. Why, *why* do I *dare* to hope? Can he ever love *me*—me, obscure, plain Sybil Rivers? No, no, that will never happen, shamed, humbled creature that I am!

"To-day, this very hour, I will expose Allandorph a he deserves, and then leave the Oaks forever. *My* suffering will be brief, though it is bitter as death, compared to Silvia Morton's fate, if she marry that man, undeceived;—marry, thinking him an angel, and finding him a devil, thirsting for her money!

"This *hour*, before Ormon Morton can reach the Oaks, I will humble Allandorph to his proper position, save Silvia, and ruin myself! Then I will go away at once,—leave this pleasant and happy home, and

escape the ignominy of meeting Ormon Morton, face to face, when he shall have heard that I, unasked, have loved him so long in vain. God help me!"

She started up as though to leave the room. As she did so, a deep drawn sigh vibrated on her ear; the window-curtains parted before her, and to her astonished gaze, appeared the wan face of a poor, half-crazed orphan girl, whom she had known well in her native village years before, and whose ruin and desertion had been the original cause of the Reverend John Allandorph's expulsion from his pulpit.

"S'hush," said the poor, mad girl, advancing towards Sybil, and looking around cautiously, as though she dreaded and expected detection. "Don't you know me, Miss Rivers?"

"Know you, my poor girl," murmured Sybil, "I fear you do not even know yourself."

"I've come after John, *my* John, Miss Rivers, he's here, isn't he?"

"Yes, Lucille, he is; but do you think he will like to see you? Don't you know this house is not his, Lucille?"

"What of that," asked the girl impatiently, "what difference does that make to *me?* Don't I love him better than anybody on earth, and haven't I followed him here to tell him my child is dead,—my little darling John? I killed it myself. I wouldn't have it live

longer for all the world; there was something in its eyes that used to hurt me when I looked at it. I don't know what, though!"

Her gaze was fixed, and staring with insanity; there was a glare about it that appalled her frightened listener. She shrank from her, and sank down on the edge of the bed.

"See here," said Lucille, laughing wildly, "don't be frightened. There isn't another woman alive that I used to like as well as you, Sybil Rivers."

She went up to her, and softly touched her on the shoulder.

"Come now, I want you to tell me all about it. Won't you, Sybil?"

"About what, my poor Lucille?"

"About *him*,—about the wedding; tell me everything about it, and don't call me *poor* again!"

Sybil did not answer; she knew not what to say. There was a few minutes of silence, during which the mad girl eyed her with a pitiful and appealing earnestness.

"Is she pretty," she asked at length; "are her eyes bright like mine, Sybil? Show her to me, won't you? I've wanted *so long* to see her!"

Then, with a sudden burst of passion, she added—

"I'll never believe that she loves him. Nobody *can* love him,—nobody *shall* love him but *me*!"

"Poor, poor Lucille," softly said Sybil, looking at her tenderly.

"Didn't I tell you not to call me *poor?* I'll not bear it! I'm *not* poor. I will not be pitied by *any one!*"

"How did you get here, Lucille?"

"I am hungry. Give me something to eat, and I'll tell you."

Miss Rivers hesitated. "Will you stay in this room perfectly quiet while I am gone?"

"Yes, I will."

Sybil left her on this assurance, but soon returned with a large plateful of the luncheon that was being prepared for the family.

The mad girl ate as if she were famished, and, indeed, in her wanderings around the Oaks, she had not tasted food for many hours. When she had done, she pushed the plate from her, folded her arms on the table, and looking up in Miss Rivers' face, with a blank, childlike expression on her own, said in a whisper—

"Did I ever tell you about little Johnnie?"

"No," replied her companion, shuddering.

"Well, not many days ago, I dropped him in the water,—he didn't cry out at all,—wasn't it strange? He sank right down, *right down!* Oh, I wish his eyes had'nt hurt me so; I might have kept him till we

went to heaven together. But they burned,—they burned me like fire! Nobody will ever know it,—will they, do you think?"

"Yes," said Sybil, sternly; "yes, Lucille, God knows it. Oh, how could you——" but she stopped, when she remembered the hopeless derangement of the lost being before her.

Presently Lucille began to show tokens of extreme weariness. Her eyelids drooped, her head fell upon her bosom, and the dead calm of sleep descended on her insanity and sorrows. Sybil gently took her wasted form in her arms, and laid it on the bed with tender care. She smoothed back the long, fair locks from the wild face, and thought mournfully of the wreck her youth and beauty had met on the great sea of life.

Poor, beautiful, and friendless—there are volumes in the words!

The mad girl's sleep was the deep, peaceful sleep of childhood. The working of her features ceased, her breath came evenly and calmly, as though she had never known a care in her life. She was young, very young, not more than twenty, and as she lay there, with a sweet, though vacant smile upon her thin lips, she appeared like a child indeed.

Sybil's heart filled with pity as she looked.

After awhile, there came a low tap at the door.

Opening it, she found one of the servants, with a message from Colonel Morgan, to request her presence in the drawing-room as soon as possible. She returned answer that she would come in a few moments, and closing the door, debated about leaving her sleeping charge alone. She decided almost instantly to take advantage of the opportunity to tell Colonel Morgan all she knew of the unfortunate girl's history.

"Now, or never!" she said bitterly, as she softly left the poor crazed Lucille to her unbroken slumbers.

She found Colonel Morgan and Mrs. Morton in the drawing-room together. The Colonel was walking up and down the apartment evidently in a disturbed state of mind; Sybil did not sit down, but stood before them in half frightened, but graceful dignity.

"Sybil," said Colonel Morgan, kindly, "I have a very impudent question to put to you, and one which, from my soul, I believe to be unnecessary. You will forgive me if it should seem intrusive."

"Yes," replied Sybil, simply, wondering what could be the object of the interview.

"Well, then—pshaw,—it's too ridiculous! Sister, ask for yourself."

"All we want to know, Miss Rivers," said Mrs. Morton frigidly, "is whether the Reverend Mr. Allandorph is, or has been at any time, an admirer or lover of yourself. A candid answer will oblige."

Sybil's pride was raised in an instant.

"Is a lover, Mrs. Morton!" she repeated, indignantly; "is it possible I am thought capable of receiving the unholy love of a man, affianced before heaven as the husband of another!"

Her tall form dilated; her face flushed scarlet.

Mrs. Morton remained as coldly haughty as before.

"May I ask an explanation of this singular question?" said Sybil, after a slight pause.

"The whole thing is simply this, my dear girl," exclaimed the Colonel, in a tone of vexation, "Silvia has got a jealous freak in her head, and will not rest till it is satisfied. Well, sister, are you content?"

"Miss Rivers has not entirely answered my question, George. I am *not* content." She looked inquiringly, and with hard and searching eyes towards the indignant girl.

"Pshaw—the thing is too silly! I will not have Miss Rivers annoyed further. You have had your answer; *I* am satisfied, and you ———"

"Stay, Colonel Morgan," interrupted Sybil, as he led his half-resisting sister-in-law towards the door,—"I have not, as Mrs. Morton says, answered her *whole* inquiry. I will do so now. You wish to know if Mr. John Allandorph," she pronounced the name with an undisguised contempt, "*has been* a lover of mine—is it not so?"

Mrs. Morton bowed coldly. She seemed to be unconscious that any one save herself had ever had a right to feel injured since the creation of the world.

"This is my answer. Distinctly, and openly, I acknowledge that he *has*, and that I rejected his proffered hand with scorn and detestation!"

Mrs. Morton turned very pale, and exclaimed, "Silvia must hear this—she must hear this herself! No Morton shall wed with a man whose hand has been refused by a ———." She stopped, for Colonel Morgan tightened his grasp on her wrist, till it fairly amounted to agony.

"Yes, Silvia must hear this herself, "he repeated, with some bitterness. "By heaven she *shall* hear it; if she can trample on the feelings of another, it is right her own were wounded." He rang the bell.

"Tell Miss Morton I desire to see her." The servant flew to obey.

In a few moments Silvia entered. She was looking miserably, and evidently had not expected to be thus suddenly made a party to the interview.

"Silvia," sternly began the Colonel, "I have sent for you, that you might hear for yourself the answer which my daughter's governess, heaven bless her! has made to you through your mother. I have not been an unobservant spectator of the manner in which you have seen fit to annoy and humble her during

your visit at my house, and it is with regret I am compelled to inform you, what you might for yourself have discovered before this, that your aunt and myself consider Miss Rivers as a beloved daughter; feeling all slights offered to her as we would any imposed on your cousin. Sybil, my child, speak to Miss Morton, and repeat what you have just told us, concerning Mr. Allandorph."

But Sybil had sunk into a seat, and hidden her face. The sight of Silvia's pale, sad countenance, drew from her pity, instead of triumph, and she almost wept as she thought of the pain she had yet to cause her, by an exposure of her lover's real character.

Scarcely heeding her uncle's reproof, Silvia went to Miss Rivers, and standing before her, said in a voice of subdued emotion—

"Tell me, tell me *all*—for the sake of mercy, oh, tell me, quickly!" Her slight frame trembled like a reed,—a terrible light burned in her eyes.

Still Sybil spoke not. She tried in vain to say the words that hung upon her lips; the sight of the anguish already writhing in that fair face, smote speech into silence.

Silvia's steadfast glance grew wildly, fearfully anxious.

With a feeble moan, reading at last what the white lips dared not utter, she fell prostrate on the floor, and

happy insensibility, for the moment, deadened the struggle of love and pride.

Then it was that Sybil Rivers' energies returned; she knelt to assist the fainting girl, and before Colonel Morgan or her mother could interfere, had placed her gently on a sofa.

"Don't touch her! go away!" vehemently cried Mrs. Morton, springing to, and bending over the form of her unhappy child, with weak and nervous efforts, striving to revive her to consciousness. "It is you who have killed her! go away, go away!"

She chafed the cold hands, and, tremblingly, attempted to bathe the pale face with water from a pitcher on the table. Very soon Silvia revived, and sat up on the lounge, seemingly as wan and weak as if she had just recovered from a long sickness.

"Mother," she murmured, faintly, "did I tell you Ormon had come?"

"Ormon!—" cried her mother, and she spoke the word as though worlds of love and hope were centered in him who bore the name. She made an involuntary movement to leave the room.

"Yes, go,—mother, go! He wants so much to see you. We were on the piazza when you sent for me, and I could scarcely prevent him from coming to you."

Her mother hurriedly kissed and left her. The moment the door closed, Silvia Morton became

another being; her person grew erect with resolution.

"Tell me," she exclaimed, addressing herself to Sybil, "you *must* tell me everything!"

Colonel Morgan stood looking on, with an expression of profound pity at her feverish eagerness.

"Can you hear *all*, Miss Morton," softly and kindly asked Sybil,—"can you hear that the man you love is unworthy of you—that he has disgraced his holy calling—that he is ——"

"Stop, Sybil!" interrupted Colonel Morgan, "do not go too far! You are excited. It is useless to represent John Allandorph as other than a Christian gentleman. He may have hidden from Silvia some early, trifling courtships, but —— come, let me take you to your room, I am sure you are not well."

"Thank heaven, I have *living* proof!" was Sybil's heartfelt answer.

And she repeated that old tale of love, and trust, and ruin. She told them of the village maiden, happy in her careless life—in her youth and loveliness. She told them of the beguiling snare—of that young girl's iron faith in him she loved—of her fall, and final desertion, and how she was, even then, under the roof that sheltered her betrayer.

With one great sigh, Silvia Morton heard the fear-

ful story, and, cold as a statue, neither moved nor spoke.

* * * * * * *

"Before I leave your kind society," replied Allandorph, with a derisive laugh at the abhorrence he read in the confronting faces of those around him,—"before I leave you, allow me the pleasure of paying a debt of gratitude that I owe this charming young lady, Miss Sybil Rivers.

"Mrs. Morton, look to your honors! For sometime past, this sweet and unsophisticated girl has favored your son," and he cast a smile at Ormon Morton, who, standing at his mother's side, eyed him, sternly, "with an *unsolicited* affection, and, if her schemes succeed, will probably end by becoming his wife; like myself, dear madam, considering everything fair in love or war!"

"Dastard!" thundered Ormon, indignantly. "How DARE you utter so foul a falsehood? Sybil Rivers is as grandly above scheming and duplicity, as you, poor wretch, are beneath contempt."

Undaunted, Allandorph pointed boldly to the shrinking form of Sybil Rivers, for confirmation of his words.

With blazing eyes, Ormon Morton advanced, menacingly, towards him. "Out of my sight," he cried—

"quick, or, by heaven, I ——" but before the words were fairly uttered, Allandorph had taken instant and cowardly flight through the open casement!

All eyes were now turned on Sybil Rivers, who, with her proud face buried in her hands, sat, bent and trembling, in her terrible humiliation.

Ormon Morton read the secret of her heart at a glance. His face lit up like sunshine, as he came beside her, and said, in a low, but audible voice—

"Sybil—dear Miss Rivers." The bowed head stirred not. "Sybil," (with suppressed tenderness,) "is this—*can* this be? Have we *both* been mistaken all these weary years? Am I returned from my distant pilgrimage, to find that mine, which I thought another's when I went away?"

There was a sudden and convulsive movement of the hands, but that was all.

It was enough!

"Oh, Sybil!" he passionately proceeded,—"answer me! Before heaven, and these witnesses, I ask, solemnly, if you will be my wife,—the good influence, the blessedness of all my days?"

Still she spoke not. But even silence is eloquent—and Ormon Morton was content.

LORRAINE GORDON.

A BIOGRAPHY.

"Love was to his impassioned soul,
Not as with others, a mere part
Of its existence—but the whole,
The very life-breath of his heart!"

MOORE.

"For suffering hath been made sublime,
And souls that lived, and died alone,
Have left an echo for all time."

"DEAD! *dead!* oh, mother!—did you say DEAD?"

"Yes, Lorraine—yes. Mora has gone home at last. From shame and poverty, from injury and insult, she is freed forever!"

The young man leaned his head upon the small table before him, and big tears rolled from his eyes.

His dress was that of a sailor. On the floor lay a little bundle of clothing, dashed down with his tarpaulin, in the first eagerness of return. His face was dark and sun-burned, but a frank, manly face withal.

"Mother?"

"Lorraine, my dear son," she answered, and the

pathos, the exquisite consolation of her tone softened his deep sorrow.

"Where is Mora buried—where does she sleep, mother?"

Without answering, the old lady took her sun-bonnet from its peg, in the rough, white-washed wall, and led the way across the fields that were at the rear of the house.

Very soon they reached the spot.

It was a lowly green mound, without monument or stone. A wild, straggling grape-vine had crept thickly over it. Everything around was calm and still; not even an echo disturbed the holy silence of the place.

With a burst of unchecked grief, the young man knelt over his sister's grave, and looking up to heaven, exclaimed, wildly—

"So best,—so best,—for God is mercy!"

His mother lifted up her shrivelled hands to heaven, with the air and gesture of a Prophetess of olden times, and cried, in a voice of heart-wrung bitterness—

"*This*, Lorraine, is the resting-place of a Gordon. This base, unmarked sod, covers a descendant of that noble house!"

Her grey hairs fluttered around her brow, as, standing there, in agonized and severe majesty, she clasped her son's hands and wept. Lorraine's sorrowing face hardened like a rock as he beheld her grief, and he

thought of the matchless wrongs that had brought them to this low estate.

Defrauded of his inheritance—brought to poverty and exile by another's sin!

"Lorraine," said his feeble, old mother, putting aside his hand, and drawing herself erect. "Lorraine, I do not advocate revenge,—far from it; but Gordondale must not remain the property of Gilbert Wold. Swear to me—promise it here, over your dead sister's grave, that you will use, during your life, all honest means to regain your birth-right; swear to me, that before you die, you will be master of Gordondale, as your fathers have been!"

The young sailor bent forward, till his lips reverently touched the turf over that humble grave, and said, solemnly—

"Mother—I swear it!"

The woods, the dim old woods, are they not beautiful? Does not the music of their sea of leaves come to the spirit with the balm of a holy hymn? Is not their thick, fragrant shade, the embodiment of peace, and their wild paths, one mass of tangled beauty?

The grand old woods! they have brought more reli-

gion into the heart of man, than all the elaborate sermons ever written!

It was in a small cottage, in the edge of a wood, a cottage almost ready to fall into ruin, and scarcely keeping out the wind and rain, that Lorraine Gordon lived for years after the death of his broken-hearted mother,—lived a lonely and miserable man, working and toiling, grudging himself the common necessaries of life, and shut completely from the companionship of his fellow-creatures. No rest, no relaxation, no friendships did he ever allow himself, lest they might take from his zeal in the one great object of his labor—the redemption of his lawful inheritance from the hands of a stranger.

Years of self-denial, of poverty and obscurity, faded slowly away.

Temptation came to him to turn aside from the path he had marked out for himself, and very painful was the effort to resist it. He was human—he could not altogether steel himself to the promptings of nature.

During his position as overseer of a neighboring factory, which station had been given him immediately after his mother's death by some of his father's former friends, Lorraine saw, and loved, a young girl, called Agnes Hill. She was poor, like himself,—like himself had once lived in circumstances better suited

to her innate refinement. She worked at one of the looms, in order to support a bed-ridden father and sick mother, and thus it was they met.

Notwithstanding Lorraine's pride in his family name, he loved, with all the strength of his manly soul, this obscure factory girl. Many a conflict did that lonely hut in the wood witness, between this passion, and the memory of his vow over Mora's grave. His promise could not be as soon fulfilled, perhaps it *never* would be, if the care of a wife and family came between him and it; the living love, and the trust with the dead, could not both exist together; and, oh! the heart-burning the knowledge gave him!

In the solitude of his forest home he had little else to think of but his hopeless attachment, and the solemn vow which he had made years before, and which, alas! he already deplored. What was the restored grandeur of the house of the dead Gordons, to the happiness, or the life-long misery of its only survivor?

He asked himself this again and again, and yet, when his heart prompted him to follow its more natural dictates, his conscience as thrillingly asserted its sway.

He had promised it, and to one who was now an angel in God's heaven!

So, for years he lived; struggling forever with that earnest, beautiful passion, and his stern duty.

Time began to silver his head and sear his heart. He became in reality, what, long before, men, ignorant of the motives of his secluded existence had believed him to be—a misanthrope. He hated the sight of all human faces, save one. As soon as the business of the day was over, he walked back to his comfortless den, and in silence and solitude brooded over his still precious love, or counted up his miser store of riches. Fortune had favored him. By well thought-of speculations, in many and various departments of the business world, the little savings which he had been years accumulating, were bringing in princely interest. In a few years more, he hoped to call Gordondale his own, by the right of lawful purchase, for the comet-like course of Gilbert Wold, the forger of his father's received will, was ended. He was dead and gone! and the property he had possessed by fraud was now offered for sale.

Agnes Hill was still unmarried. Her delicate loveliness had grown somewhat wan and faded; but to Lorraine Gordon she was still an idol of earthly affection. The beauty of her lofty character; her sacrifices for, and unswerving devotion to her parents, preserved ever fresh, ever pure, the passion her girlhood had awakened in his breast.

He had never spoken to her of his love. He did not know that she was aware of its existence; he never dreamed that all those years had passed as bitterly to her as to himself.

How should he? What did he know of the keen love-eyes of woman, when the hopes of her life are at stake? She had read his secret love for years, and, with something like wounded pride at the impotency of her own power, beheld the result of the contest between duty and passion.

At length the time came, when Lorraine Gordon entered into negotiations for the purchase of his noble birthplace, now neglected and sinking into ruin.

With a proud hand he signed over the hardly earned fortune of a life-time, and found himself the master of far-away Gordondale.

Triumphant happiness overflowed his spirit, as, in his old age, he felt himself free to gather up, as he would, the domestic love he so coveted.

Repeating to himself the words, "I am master of Gordondale," as though the sound were delicious music, for the first time in his life he bent his steps towards the humble home of Agnes Hill.

It was an humble and poor little cottage, and, unlike his own, was situated in the very heart of active life, near the noisy, dingy factory, where the worn woman's youth had wasted away.

He rapped, impatiently, and before long the door was opened by Agnes Hill herself. She looked surprised, but asked him very gently to enter. He shook the white sand from his feet, came in, and sat beside her at the cheerful hearth, made so by her own industry.

In one corner of the room, propped up with pillows, half-lying, half-sitting in a large chair, he beheld her childish old mother. Long before, her father had sunk to his eternal rest, and slept under the green grass of a peaceful grave.

Lorraine Gordon had thought, in the innocence of his long crushed heart, that it would be an easy thing to tell Agnes Hill of his love. But something, he knew not what, chained his speech; and although the words burned and battled for utterance, they refused to come from their terrible chaos when he would have had it so.

Agnes, in her quiet, composed way, tried to talk to him on subjects interesting to both. She spoke of the improved prospects of factory laborers, and of the advantages many had reaped from his own manly kindness during the years that he had been overseer.

At last, with desperate, nervous effort, Lorraine Gordon took her toil-worn hand in his, and said simply—

"Agnes, I have come to tell you that I love you!"

And Agnes slowly withdrew her hand, and said in a low, troubled voice—

"I am sorry."

Lorraine Gordon was almost blinded by the bewilderment those few words caused him, the idea of rejection having never entered his imagination. "Have I loved you all my manhood, to find it vain at last?" he questioned bitterly. "Have I lived on the mere *hope* of your affection so many years for nothing, Agnes? Do you not, oh! can you not love me?"

Agnes Hill gave him a look of proud sorrow as she answered—

"Lorraine Gordon, you have come *too late!* I acknowledge that I once loved you—long ago. You were more to me than aught else on earth—my whole being ached for your love! Pride has conquered mine—you are *too late!*"

"Oh! Agnes, may not years of devotion win it again? I barred my heart to you that I might redeem, by rigid economy, the ancient dwelling of my ancestors. Thank heaven, Gordondale is mine at last! Agnes, you are the only woman worthy to be its mistress; oh! tell me you will *try* to love its master!"

But that wild temptation of wealth and luxury for herself and dying mother, shook not the pride of the still beautiful Agnes Hill.

She threw back her curling brown hair, and repeated those, to him, terrible words—

"Lorraine Gordon, you are *too late!*"

He heard his fate, and left her.

It was the entrance of Gordondale.

The tiny stone lodge lifted up its roof from a wilderness of ivy and other climbing vines. It appeared the same as ever, and there came out to welcome the new master the same old servant who had dwelt there with his family in by-gone times.

Taking the keys from the venerable gate-keeper's trembling hands, Lorraine passed up the broad avenues alone, and on foot. A mile or so brought him to the home of his boyhood.

Change had left many direful traces. One of the wings was fallen into decay, and the main building itself looked as though the storm king held his orgies over it. Neglect and extravagant usage were visible everywhere. The once well-kept garden was a waste, and many a stately tree had disappeared; rank weeds choked up the paths; all was desolation wherever the eyes turned.

Applying the key, the old man entered the house. Through all those antique rooms he hurried in eager

excitement, but, alas! it was not the Gordondale of his youth. The only thing that served to recall the old, old days, was a painting of his mother, hanging in its accustomed place on the walls of the dining-room. He sank into a seat before it, and leaning his face on his clasped hands, wept tears of bitter and two-fold disappointment.

When the old servant came to seek him, he found him sitting there, cold and dead!

Following the beckonings of angel memories, the soul of LORRAINE GORDON had defied forever the grasp of earthly disaster.

A

FRAGMENT OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

Worcester :— * * * I will unclasp a secret book,
And to your quick-conceiving discontents
I'll read you matter, deep and dangerous ;
As full of peril and advent'rous spirit
As to o'erwalk a current roaring loud,
On the unsteadfast footing of a spear.

HENRY IV.

Jaffier :—There's not a wretch that lives on common charity,
But's happier than me.

VENICE PRESERVED.

GOD gave me an intellect worthy of an angel, and I have made it the slave of demons.

No longer stifling the voice within, that calls in agony for utterance, I will confess, to this silent paper a deed that never yet was surpassed in wickedness among men.

I am the son of well-circumstanced parents. I was bred for the profession in which my father made his

fortune—the law, because my oratorical genius seemed to point that way.

Unfortunately for me, however, I had scarcely passed my final examination, when my mother's only brother, Colonel Josiah Oliver, publicly proclaimed me his heir, and sent for me to reside permanently with him at the Cordoza estates, which, with a portion of his vast wealth, he had just purchased in South America. I bade an eternal farewell to my profession, and left New-York in the year ——. With the blessings of my kind old father and my grey-haired mother still fresh upon me, I reached my destination.

My uncle I had never seen. I found him to be an old man, somewhat *roué* in appearance, but still enjoying a hale decline of life. He received me kindly, settled upon me during his existence an annuity that fairly dazzled me with its amplitude, only exacting in return the attentions due from youth to an unwedded and childless age.

The Castle of Cordoza was the pride and boast of the small town at the entrance of which it stood.

It was built on a massive ledge of rocks—a magnificently terrible precipice, that overhangs the lovely, but comparatively unknown, inland lake, Aro, so-called from the perfect circle it described. The towering mountains at whose feet the castle lay, gave it majestic shelter from the elements, and presented to the

traveller lingering on the spot, a vision of such wild and fantastic beauty, that the senses were oppressed with its luxuriance. As far as the eye could reach, these mountains extended, crowned with clouds and savagely picturesque foliage, (who does not know the rich character of the South American forests?) until, fading in the distance, they melted into space. Civilization had neither destroyed the romantic langour that hovered over these beautiful tropical regions, nor obliterated the old-time landmarks, the ruins of ancient palaces and fanes, relics of a race of people that has passed away forever.

Surrounded by everything that could stimulate the imagination, and triumphantly elevate the spirit over its clay, I lost my inordinate love of mere earthly enjoyments, and revelled, for the time being, in a new world.

It was then, that, risen above my natural self, I first saw Veronica Lola, a young girl, the grandchild on her father's side of a tenant of my uncle's.

Riding one day along an exquisitely romantic road, on the estate that was soon to be my own, in passing a plain and rather poor *cabaña*, I was startled by hearing issuing from it, a mellow female voice, chanting in Spanish, a hymn to the Virgin. It was a beautiful little trifle, such as should only flow from the lips (as it did then) at the dusky opening of evening. With delicacy, and

yet great precision of style, the voice sang on, while I, unseen, listened to the very close of the concluding *crescendo* and *diminuendo*. Curiosity then moved me to look upon this syren who charmed mortals while worshipping Immortality.

I dismounted, and had placed my hand on the latch of the gate, when I saw a young girl, seated, unconscious of my approach, at one of the open windows.

Although scarcely more than the earliest years of womanhood had passed over her head, the rich, regal type of her appearance was that of maturity.

She was not actually beautiful; yet there was that in her face that compelled admiration—a weird spiritual gleam of something higher and holier than physical perfection, although that of itself is both high and holy.

Her eyes were dark and of an imploring expression, like those of the giraffe, the most beautiful and graceful of brute animals; her long hair was straight as an Indian's, and her features, half those of a Madonna, half those of the noble woman; a peculiar purity of complexion adding greatly to their unearthly radiance.

At any other time than that, I should have turned from looking on such a face with a feeling of immeasurable relief; but, as I have said, I was changed. The pitiful passions that hitherto had rebelled against companionship with, because antagonistic to, beings

like Veronica, then slept within me, and, alas! but to display redoubled vigor and vitality on awakening.

I am no Fatalist. I do not attempt to veil the atrocity of my crimes under the poor screen such a creed affords. I believe that the WILL of man is his destiny! His fate is in his own hands. It is in his power to shape his course for an eternal heaven or an eternal hell!

I will not linger over the introduction that I contrived to win, in the home of Veronica's grandparents; nor state more than the simple fact, that loved and was beloved.

Every time that I beheld this young girl, my passion for her increased; until the wildest idolatry of image-worshippers was not more violent or more impious than my own.

* * * * * * *

The time came when I felt it necessary to speak to my uncle Oliver on the subject of my betrothal to this young Spanish *rustica*, the obscurity of whose origin I instinctively felt would cause him much vexatious regret at my choice. Prepared as I naturally was for an unreasonable display of anger, I confess I did not expect the outburst of violence, the tempest of fury, that succeeded the avowal of my love. My uncle turned perfectly livid with rage. He stamped, he swore, he cursed all the women that ever were

born; and vowed that my folly, as he termed it, had made me only worthy to be classed among them. Then suddenly his wrath subsided, and a suppressed, but even more ominous displeasure took its place. His manner reminded me of the quietness of a hungry and caged lion. "Go, marry this wretched plebeian," he said, calmly. "Go, marry her, if you will; but, remember, you do so at the penalty of *your entire inheritance!* Go, poor fool; and may your children wring your heart, as you have wrung mine! May they live to curse you, and the day that gave them being! Go!"

I was too thunder-stricken at the information contained in this speech, to utter a word, and my uncle proceeded—

"Choose between this girl and me! There is boundless wealth and power on the one side—a fickle woman, poverty, and servile labor, on the other." He paused, then added, with a slightly softened voice—

"Farlie, listen to me. I say this for your eternal good. *I*, too, have loved." He strode the room with gigantic strides. "I loved a creature, young and beautiful as this peasant girl. Unlike your case, our rank in life was equal. We were poor alike; and in blind infatuation, I swore to enrich myself for her sake. Love! *that* was no word to express my devotion to her, my faith in her integrity. I adored her—I wor-

shipped her, like,—like,"—he seemed to hesitate for a comparison, "like devils in hell worshipping heaven. I staked my all upon her, and,—and I LOST!

"I came to South America, freighted with more than wealth in the treasure of her love. I went back to her, the possessor of almost fabulous riches, acquired for *her* sake alone, and found her,—good God! not even the *wife* of my rival!"

Iron-nerved as I had always deemed my uncle Oliver to be, he burst into a passion of tears. There was a long pause.

"From that moment, the sight of a woman became repulsive to me—from that moment, I vowed myself to a never-ending celibacy.

"Farlie Gardener, Veronica Lola is the *daughter* of that woman, long since dead! I never knew it until a few days ago. For her mother's sake, I HATE her. Marry her,—(she inherits her mother's face, and doubtless carries as pure a conscience, as changeable a taste,)—marry her, and, by heaven, you will do so, *a beggar!* I desire to save you, Farlie, from the fate that has been mine—I desire to save you from much that is hard and bitter to endure. This girl will deceive you, as her mother deceived me before her. Forget her, daughter as she is of a false and unholy woman—forget ——" but I heard him no farther. I flung myself

from the room—I mounted my horse, and rode as for life and death to Veronica.

The little good in my disposition was aroused. I revealed my situation to my betrothed, and offered to sacrifice everything—my prospects—my expected inheritance, all for *her!* I implored her to be my wife, and narrowly I watched her open and changeful face, to see the effect my words produced. A doubt had entered my mind, (it had arisen from my uncle's words,) and I longed to know, if wealth or poverty had aught of influence over her love.

I had found her with her grandfather in their pretty garden, he busy with his spade, she weaving, carelessly, a garland of flowers; not flowers like our own palely beautiful northern ones, but bright tropical blossoms, luxuriant in richness of color and shape, reminding one of the face of a woman grown insolent with too great loveliness.

Veronica heard me as though she were in a dream. Her eyes dimmed.

"We will wait, Farlie—we will wait," she said. "Did you think that I could accept a sacrifice from you like *this?* Did you think *me* capable of ruining you, Farlie? We will wait, and some happy day your uncle may relent—then, and only then, shall I become your wife!"

So I returned to the Castle of Cordoza as its heir still.

I promised my uncle all he required of me, regarding Veronica; because this was the sole condition on which I could be restored to his favor—*I swore never to make her my wife!*

From that moment a demon took possession of me. From that moment I plotted how to retain *both* Veronica and my inheritance!

My oath, never to marry her, I regarded as lightly as if it had not been spoken. Its existence did not annoy me. I was prepared to set it at defiance at any hour, when I could do so without injuring myself.

The selfishness of my nature broke out afresh. I was inexpressibly thankful that Veronica had resisted my alarmed and passionate appeal for her hand. I *now* felt that I would rather relinquish even that, than cast away from me my uncle's princely fortune.

Relinquish her *hand* only; fiend that I was, I never dreamed of relinquishing *Veronica!*

A thousand temptations assailed me. I longed for my uncle's death, as the only release from my position. I even plotted against his life; but an innate and inexplicable fear of retribution prevented the accomplishment of my designs.

My inhuman desire was soon and suddenly gratified.

It was not many months before the Angel of Death added the soul of the Lord of Cordoza to those already passed away to the great Silent Land.

What is this thing that men name soul? We cannot *see* it when it parts from the body, although we behold the physical agony caused by the solemn separation. Its destiny is, like itself, a fearful mystery—a mystery that must remain such as long as the world exists.

In compliance with my uncle's desire, I had ceased visiting at the humble cottage of Veronica's grandparents. This did not prevent, however, frequent interviews in the ancient forest that made the glory of the estate. As yet, I had not dared to say aught that her high-minded purity could resent; and now that my uncle's death removed the only obstacle to my marriage, I went again to the cottage, and openly demanded the hand of Veronica of her parents.

It was granted me, together with the blessing of the aged couple, who, however, did not accord me the favor I asked, without first revealing what they little thought I already knew of Veronica's birth, nobly giving me opportunity to retract my proposal.

My uncle's funeral took place on the fifth of September, attended with much pomp and splendour. On the tenth it was decided that we were to be quietly married by the *sacerdote* of an adjacent chapel.

The morning of the tenth arrived. An unaccountable foreboding hovered over me as, ordering the most lovely of bridal bouquets from the castle gardeners, I set out for the cottage. At the little gate over which I had leaned when beholding Veronica for the first time, she came to meet me then, attired very simply for the occasion in a thin, white robe.

"Father Andrae is come, and wishes to see you privately before the ceremony," she said, as I pressed my lips to her blushing forehead, and presented my flowers.

"*Privately*,"—the word rang in my ears disagreeably. What *private* message could Father Andrae have to tell *me?* I had never even seen him, and knew nothing more of him than that, at Veronica's request, his were to be the lips that gave me power over her future life.

Arm in arm we passed up the garden walk to the veranda, through a window opening upon which, I beheld a man in priestly attire. I was silent and abstracted. Veronica seemed pained by this, and said fondly, but reproachfully—

"Do you regret, Farlie, that I am not more worthy

of your castled home? Before it is too late, do you repent that you have chosen me? The obscure, the low-born peasant is indeed no mate for one like you."

Before I could answer, we were joined by Father Andrea. With a brief and strangely imperative gesture, he drew me aside. Veronica left us.

"Do you love this girl?" he inquired, following her form with his eyes.

"Why do you ask?" I demanded, impatiently. "Are you not here to make us one? Does not the disparity in our station bespeak my love?"

Father Andrae smiled. It was a cold, much-expressing, half-sneering smile.

"Station!" he repeated slowly, "aye, it is of that very station I would speak. I know a secret, Señor, that involves both that boasted station and your lately acquired wealth. I know a secret that will blast you forever, did I but withhold it till to-morrow. Now tell me, solemnly, for I would know—do you, or do you not, love this good and sweet girl?"

"As my life," I answered, "and by all that's holy, before night she shall be my wife!"

"I doubt it," sneered Father Andrae, watching me curiously.

"Sir," I cried angrily, "you were not sent here for trifling. Say what you have to say, and let the cere-

mony begin; let me assure you, that all idle boasts will be treated as they deserve."

"I forgot," said the *sacerdote*, bowing with mock reverence, "I forgot that I spoke to the heir of Cordoza;" and again he smiled disdainfully.

"Señor," he continued, "do you know whether your late uncle made a will just before his sudden death?"

"Yes," answered I, greatly relieved, for, unconsciously, his words had filled me with alarm. "I know that he made *no* will since the one constituting me his sole heir, which I myself saw drawn up, signed and witnessed in June last."

"And you are *quite sure*, Señor, that there has been no other substituted since?"

"Quite," I answered, readily and haughtily.

"What if I should assure you, Señor, *that there has been?*"

"Impossible—it is false as hell!" I cried, now fully aroused.

"Say rather, Señor, that it is true as heaven! I have proof!"

"Where is it! give it me! let me see it!" and I clutched the priest's arm.

Very calmly he took from his bosom a small roll of papers, gave it to me, and folded his arms over his capacious chest, as with trembling hands I held it before me, and attempted, but in vain, to decipher the written

characters. They swam before me—my eyes grew hazed. All I comprehended was, that this was indeed a later will, signed by different witnesses, *and making my marriage with Veronica the forfeit of the entire Cordoza estate!*

Savagely, and with a brutal triumph, I suddenly tore the will to atoms, and scattered the fragments around me. To my surprise, Father Andrae neither spoke nor changed his attitude, but stood regarding me with fixed and deliberate gaze.

"Do you think, poor wretch," he at length enunciated, in a low, deep voice, "do you think you have destroyed the last proof of your uncle's regard? Do you think me madman enough to place in your impious hands anything but a worthless *copy?*"

With a cry of defeated rage, I aimed, but unsuccessfully, a blow at his head.

"Señor," he proceeded, tauntingly, "I spoke untruly when I said you would not wed to-day! I am at your command. Of course you will yield this wealth to others, and at once make Señorita Lola your wife. Come, Señor, I am somewhat pressed for time. Your bride awaits you."

"Devil!" I hissed, passionately, "wife or no wife, Veronica Lola shall be *mine!*—Begone! If it were only to punish your insolence, I shall remain the Lord of Cordoza!"

He left me, and re-entered the cottage, for the interview had taken place on its veranda. I drew my tablets from my pocket, wrote a hasty line of temporary and fond farewell to Veronica, and returned to the castle, determining to ferret out completely this mystery of the new will before I beheld her again.

That night I never closed my eyes. I passed it in searching thoroughly all my uncle's papers, deciphering piles of manuscript, and reading old letters, in the hope of discovering some, however slight, intimation of the making of the second will. Finding none, my spirits became somewhat less depressed, and striving to comfort myself with the idea that I had been duped by Father Andrae, (for what purpose, I could not imagine,) at the breaking of morning I fell into a sound and refreshing slumber.

I was awakened late in the forenoon by a servant, who came to inform me that the Superior of a neighboring monastery, (the same who had attended my uncle in his dying hours,) desired to obtain a few moments interview.

Dressing myself hastily, with a renewal of alarm, I descended to meet him. The visit struck me as boding no good. The Superior had not come alone, Father Andrae and two monks accompanied him.

"Son," began the good Superior, blandly, "I am here on an errand that will doubtless be displeasing to

you, but my duty must be discharged. The Virgin be praised, that Brother Andrae saved you yesterday from a deed that might have impoverished you entirely, although our monastery would thereby have become enriched; your departed uncle having willed all his enormous estate to it, in case of forfeiture by you. The document was placed by him in my hands, shortly before his death. It is duly signed and lawfully witnessed. I have come to-day to inform you publicly of its existence, that you may not, my son, cause its reversion to us unknowingly. Much good as in our hands this money might produce, we desire not to possess it by fraud,—Heaven forbid! Had I known that there was any possibility of your marriage, within so short a time as this, I would not have waited even so brief a period to announce it to you."

I thanked him coldly, rang for refreshments, and unceremoniously retired to my apartments.

It was all true, then, and bitterly I cursed the memory of my dead uncle, as fiercely I strode the floor. It was true that I must give up the possession of this splendour, or renounce Veronica.

I felt that I could not do either, and stilling the rebukes of conscience, I laid my plans *to retain both.*

Give up the noble, the beautiful Cordoza, I *would* not,—renounce Veronica, I *could* not!

Many days elapsed before I ventured near the Lolas' cottage. I felt, too, like a dishonorable man. It was long before I conquered the feeling, and sought the society of her, whom I loved more madly and more selfishly than ever.

Veronica had grown paler and thinner; the earthly expression of her face was now lost in that of the Madonna. A more spiritual and holy countenance I had never beheld.

She greeted me kindly, but distantly.

"Father Andrae," thought I, and inwardly vowed revenge. Veronica's love was too deep to be lightly shaken. The effect of her confessor's exhortations vanished before my well-contrived words of passionate apology, and reiterated affection. She clung around my neck, and wept bitterly as she begged forgiveness, for the doubt she had entertained of my truth. I assured her of the correctness of the report Father Andrae had given her, concerning the contents of my uncle's will; but solemnly declared, that I had never for one moment dreamed of retaining his riches at the price of her love. I spoke of the humble and happy home that was yet to be ours, and, sobbing on my shoulder, Veronica forgave my late desertion, in girlish words of such tender and happy hopefulness, that I half longed to make my artfully painted picture, reality.

Oh, it was but the old, old story! By degrees, and it was the work of months, I revealed my true design.

It is enough to say, that Veronica met me with all the womanly scorn, and insulted dignity, of which her nature was capable, and, in frigid disdain, banished me from her presence.

Never had she appeared more bewilderingly beautiful than on that day. Her gesture of queenly and imperious command to leave her; her erect majesty, and the appalling radiance of her indignant face, are fresh in my memory to this day.

A few weeks passed. The luxury for which I had sacrificed so much, grew more hateful to me than I can express. Night brought no repose—day nothing but discontent.

One morning, a whim seized me to visit the underground cells, for which the Castle of Cordoza was both feared and noted.

Guided by one of my servants, bearing a lighted torch, I passed through the long, damp galleries which led below the wine vaults, to the unfrequented dens, used, in by-gone times, as prisons for the guilty or unfortunate. The servant being familiar with the principal cells of these underground passages, led me through them, for inspection. It filled me with terror to behold them. Some were reeking with the odors

of decay, (for the damp destroyed whatever rude furniture had been allowed to remain in them,) and, in one, horrible sight! was a fleshless skeleton, chained by heavy irons, on the wrists and ankles, to the stone wall.

"That," said the servant, piously crossing himself, "is all that remains of Antonio Nui, a pirate, imprisoned here for his crimes, by one of the first Lords of Cordoza, who caught him in the act of firing a vessel, at anchor in the Bizcaya, after he had plundered it of its treasure and murdered its crew. He died of consumption, contracted from the dampness of his cell. The Virgin rest his soul!"

In other of the dungeons were fragments of unrecognisable human bones, to which there was no name or story attached; to none of these cells was any light admitted, nor air that did not come through their grated doors.

Ascending several long, dark staircases, we returned by a different route from that which we had entered. I was somewhat surprised, on emerging from these subterranean tombs, to find myself quite near to my private rooms; the last staircase having a door opening at its head, into the same corridor as my own. I shuddered involuntarily as I perceived the fact.

There were mingled horrible dreams with my dis-

turbed slumbers that night. In imagination, I was again in those dens of punishment. The skeleton of poor Antonio Nui, smiled dead, ghastly smiles at me, and rattled its chains in despairing efforts to get free. Anon, its fleshless face seemed changed to Veronica's reproachful, Madonna-like, countenance: her pale lips curling with scornful defiance. Around her head twined a *living* serpent, in place of the jeweled diadem, which I had once given her, fashioned in that shape. Serpents, too, usurped the place of the bracelets on her white arms, wreathing and rustling in disgusting folds around them. In a moment, they altered to the pirate Nui's chains, and I awoke with a loud, defiant laugh ringing in my ears.

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Wherever I might hope to meet Veronica, I was in the habit of loitering nearly all my time. At the houses of the poor and sick, and in our old forest trysting-places, I passed many hours watching for her coming. Once, or twice, I attained my object; but it was always with witnesses that we met, and speech was, therefore, out of the question. I even wrote to her, entreating to be forgiven, and promising for the future to aspire to no warmer title than that of a friend. I penned these letters humbly and contritely.

They were no poor affectation. None of them were ever answered.

I thought and felt myself treated wrongfully; a desire for revenge entered my unworthy soul. Had I received the slightest tidings from Veronica,—a mere line,—a single word,—such is the importance of trifles, I might have become a different man. It was a turning point in my life. I had in a degree conquered my evil angel; that neglectful silence restored it to more than its usual sway. I still desired to meet Veronica; but it was no longer in a mood of contrition or humility. The time soon came when we were again to stand face to face—not lovingly, not kindly as once, but in scorn and passion.

I had taken a long walk, my gun on my shoulder, through the forest that separates the castle from the plain cabaña of the Lola family. As I sought leisurely a large mossy rock near its outskirts, that had been the scene of happy meetings, I heard Veronica's well-known voice, singing a fragment of retrospective verse that I had found among my uncle's papers after his death, and which, at my request, she had adopted to the music of a most melancholy French *chanson*. It evidently alluded to an earlier love than that of Veronica's mother. It ran thus:—

I often stroll along the shore
Where once we lingered, hand in hand—
Along that beach of wave-washed sand
Where we shall wander never more!

Its tall sea-turf is green and bright,
Its grey rocks rear their rough heads still,
And everything, of good and ill,
Is yet the same unto my sight.

The quiet waves go murmuring by
With olden melody of sound—
I see no change in aught around,
Though I behold with saddened eye.

Upon our rustic, vine-clad seat,
That now is crumbling in decay,
I sit to dream the hours away,
And wonder time has been so fleet!

Around it lies the self-same scenes,
As in those days of memories old;
They need but thee, of grace untold,
To blot the time that intervenes.

They need but thy sweet form and face
To make the present seem the past,
When, like a dream too sweet to last,
The happy hours flow on apace.

Alas! I know I've seen depart
My manhood's strong meridian days,
Yet, as old thought around me strays,
I'm young again in limb and heart.

I feel the vigor of my youth
In memories of thy bygone kiss;
Oh, later love than followed this
Has never known a purer truth!

Apparently, the sound of her voice proceeded from the very rock of which I was in quest. Silently following its direction, I soon reached an opening in the wood that gave me a view of the unconscious girl. As I supposed, she was sitting on the rock, and oh, pale and fragile as a breaking lily! The sight would have melted any heart but mine!

On her brow she wore the serpent crown which I had given her long before, and which caused me such terror in my dream. Her wrists were encircled by the bracelets of the same pattern, and with downcast and abstracted eyes she carelessly toyed with them, twisting first one and then the other around her wasted arms, till the diamond eyes of the reptiles glittered with such painful reality, that I sickened involuntarily. A horrible and sudden idea came into my mind.

The cells, the castle cells should be my revenge!

In the excitement the thought occasioned, I caused a slight rustling of some branches on which I was leaning. Veronica started, and turned towards me. Our eyes met!

She did not tremble or discover alarm. On the contrary, with unequalled dignity, she gave me a cold bow of recognition, and gathering up her lace mantilla, turned to depart.

Then it was that I advanced from my hiding-place.

"Veronica," I began,—but she interrupted me with fierce energy :—

"Do not speak to me! I will not hear you! Have you not offered me sufficient insult that you would heap more upon me? Look at me!" and she came fearlessly closer, till her warm breath mingled with my own ;—"I am a poor, defenceless girl, weak and powerless. If you are human, you will cease haunting me with your evil presence. Thank heaven, I no longer love you!"

I seized her hand as she again attempted to leave the spot. I fixed my eyes upon her searchingly. As I did so, she became visibly agitated.

"Veronica," I cried, exultingly, "you utter falsehoods! You *do* love me, and that bêtter than your soul's salvation!"

She could not endure my fixed, protracted gaze, but giving a murmured cry, sank at my feet. I did not remove the magnetic influence of my eyes, until, stooping, I kissed her gently on the head. The act seemed to restore her to her usual self. She arose.

"Be it so," she said, and her voice was the very essence of bitterness. "Be it so—I *love you*, and hate myself; are you satisfied?"

"Not until you have *proved* this love, Veronica. For the last time, I ask you. You cannot be my *wife;* I will not deceive you, as to *that.* I should be more

than mortal did I make the sacrifice that I must, to give you the name!"

"Tempter! will you never have done? Know that although I cannot tear you from my heart, I would spurn you, even if offering me that sacred title which but now you desecrated in the naming! Begone! No power in heaven or earth can move me."

Her words maddened me. I caught her, suddenly, in my arms. I felt myself endowed at the moment with strength to bear her away, and I laughed, fiendishly, at her vain struggles, her agonized cries.

Night was descending. I waited until utter darkness covered the face of the earth, and silently carried my then unconscious burden to the castle. Through a private entrance, unseen, I bore her fainting form to my own rooms.

It was hours before she revived from her trance. Meanwhile I had taken, into the most habitable of the subterranean dungeons, one of my own mattresses, some bed-clothing, a chair, table, and lamp. I knew Veronica's nature too well, to imagine that she would readily yield her present resolve; but I trusted to time and the solitude of this awful confinement for eventual compliance, desiring a *willing* sharer of my love and splendour, or *none*.

When all my arrangements were completed, I again took the slight frame of my still unresisting victim in

my arms, and consigned her to the living tomb prepared for her reception. I had previously sent away the servants, located in that wing of the castle, that my diabolical deed might have no witnesses.

After placing Veronica on the rude couch in her cell, I retrimmed the lamp, (for sin made me afraid of darkness,) and sitting down on the only seat with which I had furnished the place, I awaited her recovery. Fright and despair had so entirely overcome her senses, that it was long before I perceived signs of returning consciousness.

At length, with a deep sigh, she opened her wild eyes, and looked around. Her haggard surprise, as she saw those frowning stone walls, and recognized my features by the dim, unearthly light, sent wicked satisfaction quivering through me.

With an evident effort she attained a standing posture. A fierce resentment shone over her face.

"Where am I, Farlie Gardener? What is the meaning of these prison walls and grated door? Oh, my God!" A sudden flood of recollection seemed to come to her, of the scene in the wood.

"Where are you?" I repeated. "In the Castle of Cordoza, and at my mercy."

She looked upon me with an expression of grand, proud pity, and murmured something that I did not hear.

"Veronica, listen—you are my prisoner. Not a human being knows of your presence in this place. You are entirely in my power. No hand but God's can take you from me. It is before you to choose between a life of solitary confinement in this underground and remote room, removed forever from the light of day, and from the faces of humanity, and a happy, luxurious existence, with one whom you love, and who loves you; but whom circumstances ——"

"Over which he has no control," shuddered Veronica, with a wild, unnatural laugh, that resounded gloomily in the passage-way beyond. I did not heed her, but continued—

"Whom the force of circumstances prevents from making you his lawful wife. Your obstinacy on this point will be doubly criminal, for by it, you destroy both yourself and me. Be my wife, in the sight of heaven, Veronica, since you can never become it on earth."

Warming with my words, I prostrated myself before her on the stone floor, forgetting her former disdain—forgetting how I had forfeited all claim to her regard, by my cruelty—remembering only her and my great love. She restored me to myself, by saying, in a cold, sarcastic voice—

"Arise, Señor—I entreat. It is I, rather, who

should bend to *you*, who are the master of this dreary prison, while I am here as its inmate!"

"Veronica—you shall repent this! A few weeks in this dainty dwelling will break your proud spirit. Perhaps, obstinate woman, you may even kneel to *me*, as I have this night knelt to you—*in vain!*"

"Kneel to you—monster! Never! I will starve—perish alone and unknown in this loathsome den; but *never*, NEVER will I kneel to YOU! Are you man, flesh, human, or is some demon entered into your being? Great heaven, is it—*can* it be, that a creature made in God's image, dares defile himself with work like this?"

Involuntarily I shrunk back, appalled at her words, and her heavenward gestures. We looked at each other. Then, changing her manner, Veronica said, in a low, despairing, but firm voice—

"Leave me. I can but die. You have yet to learn, Farlie Gardener, of what the souls of true women are composed. Once for all, I tell you, death is more acceptable than your unholy love!"

She waved me fiercely from the cell. Mortified at the ill effect of my monstrous punishment, I obeyed. Choking with anger, I drew the door violently after me, and locked and bolted it, upon the only being whom I loved on earth.

Reaching my rooms, I rang furiously for Pedro, my

personal attendant. He answered the summons almost instantly, and, in hot haste, I sent for the domestic who, not long before, had conducted me through the subterranean galleries of the castle. I was too much excited to act cautiously, and gave him, when he arrived, hurried and peremptory commands, to fasten and blockade securely the lower entrance to the cells.

"I do not wish them entered, or the door unclosed, without my personal orders," I said, in carelessly haughty answer to the man's undisguised astonishment.

"And the upper door, Señor, the one opening into your own corridor, *shall I seal that also?*"

"No," I answered, with badly assumed calmness, "I have the key in my own possession. That will be sufficient. Let me know the instant my commands are executed." The man bowed and retired.

Great was the consternation occasioned throughout the whole town, by the sudden disappearance of Veronica Lola. Her grand-parents grew nearly frantic with grief, and spent the whole of their simple earnings in searching for their lost child. These two aged people came to me themselves, and with many tears, desired my assistance in seeking to throw light

on the mystery of her disappearance. I knew the interview in the forest had been unseen, and, therefore, with great show of concern, aided them as though I were totally ignorant of everything connected with the affair. I even offered large rewards, and succeeded, as I expected I should, in diverting suspicion from myself.

I was rich, despotic, and powerful. Those who could, perhaps, have spoken, held their peace from very fear.

A month elapsed. Every day I carried food, secretly taken from my own table, to my dauntless prisoner. Since the first night of her confinement I had not spoken to her; I was determined, that if she yielded, it should be voluntarily. Not one word of persuasion or argument passed my lips.

At first, Veronica retained her proud and haughty demeanour. When I unlocked her cell daily, placed food and drink upon her table, and replenished her lamp, (for I was not yet cruel enough to condemn her to perpetual night,) she eyed me with all her old majesty. I, wretched craven, pale and trembling with the consciousness of unnatural actions, might have been mistaken for the prisoner, and she for my defiant gaoler. Often she seemed to expect me to address her, but I never did; and after the lapse of a month, she grew gradually humbler. She implored me, for

pity on herself, on her youth, and most of all, for her old grand-parents. She represented to me the joy that accompanies unrewarded generosity,—in a word, she stooped so far as to ask, with sobs of passionate tenderness, for an *unconditional* liberation.

And she asked in vain.

My hour of triumph at last was come.

From that time, my nights and days were lost in one wild carousal. Feasting and merry-making awoke midnight echoes in the old castle corridors; the tinkling slide of dancer's feet, the sound of music and revelry, of laughter, phrenzied by wine, black with age and rare richness, resounded perpetually throughout its rooms; but vainly I tried by such means to deaden conscience and thought.

I could not shut out pale statuesque visions of a woman, dying in the secret solitude of death-engendering damps. Her black eyes haunted me wherever I moved. Amid the blaze of festive illuminations, their looks of entreaty fell upon me; they floated on the very air, and, in my fitful sleep, burned themselves into my dreams.

Another month—two, three, passed slowly away, to the sepulchre of Time's dead.

Day by day I visited Veronica, and day by day answered her dying appeals for freedom by sullen

silence, or a brutal vow, that I or Death should be the conqueror of her obstinacy.

Meanwhile, reports were gradually gaining on the public ear, that gave me much disquiet of mind. Link by link was added to the chain of circumstances, that went far towards establishing the certainty of my crime. I was known to have been the unsuccessful suitor of Veronica. The fact and contents of my uncle's second will; my conduct to Veronica afterward; my letters to her, and many other trifling things, all conspired to fix the guilt of her abduction on myself. I became shunned and avoided. Men, women, and children, fled from my path, as though I were some hideous, misshapen wretch, frightful to look upon. Report, (that never satisfied monster,) said, too, that my uncle's death had been sudden and mysterious. Suspicion of the committal of one evil thing led to that of another.

I was accused, and openly denounced as a murderer!

THERE have been times in my life when I would have given worlds, were they in my possession, to hold the power of a musical improvisatore. This mood of inspiration is on me now, even as I write. Could I

but find expression—could I but *vent* the whirlwind of music that is coursing through me, I feel that I should form this, my confession, into a creation more grandly understandable than the words that my pen traces in cold obedience to my will. My fingers throb—my voice beats, silently, for utterance against its prison. Gods! could I fling from me this passion flood of music, I would make sounds that one could *grasp!*—sounds, embodying pictures of life-like and awful beauty!

At length I wearied utterly of Veronica's unshaken resolution, and I sickened, too, of her constant prayers for freedom—her frantic petitions for but *one* breath of fresh air—*one* glimpse of green fields.

Every day added to my uneasiness.

Public opprobrium thickened around me. I longed for victory over Veronica's stubborn will, and panted to silence evil report forever, by producing her as the *willing* partner of my home and fortune.

Her grand-parents were already dead. Dead of terror and sorrow for her unknown fate!

There was nothing now to keep her from me—no scruple which had *earthly* foundation. God alone stood between us!

At last, in the firm resolve to conquer her determination, either by persuasion or threat, I descended one day to her living tomb.

She had been ill of a fever, and was confined to her bed.

When I entered, and drew a seat to her side, (it was an unusual proceeding,) Veronica raised her solemn eyes to mine, and with a weirdly holy face, said, slowly—

"Tell me if it be possible that you believe in Heaven—in the existence of an Almighty! If you do,—if you acknowledge God, what think you, Farlie Gardener, of death, and of judgment afterwards, for deeds done in the body?"

I was irritated by the repetition of a question that filled my ears, waking or sleeping, and kept alive a remorse I strove, in vain, to smother. I bade her, rudely, keep silence, while, for the last time, I offered her liberty and happiness.

"Never again, Veronica, will I give you this opportunity of escape from the fate which will be yours, sooner or later, in these vaults. Your cell is below the level of the lake, and the lingering death which you must meet here will remain forever unknown. Neither angel nor devil can save you, if you reject this last,—remember, *the last* offer of mercy! You have no opposition to dread from your family—both your grandfather and grandmother *are dead!*"

Her own bodily anguish, her long sufferings, had so weakened her faculties, that she received the

intelligence with scarcely any perceptible sign of emotion.

A deeply drawn sigh, and the tightened clasp of her locked hands, was all that indicated she had heard. I continued:

"As long as your perversity has held you here a prisoner, it is not yet too late to give you freedom, air, sunshine. I will brave all consequences, all personal risk to myself. Not only shall you be restored to the world, but I will place you in a position worthy alike of *your* beauty and *my* love. Utter but one word of consent, and you exchange this tomb for wealth and luxury, such as the earth has seldom seen. Money, unlimited, shall be placed in your hands for distribution among the poor; think, then, of the good you may do, as well as the happiness you confer upon me. Draw the comparison between *that* life and *this;* ponder on it well, and in your answer, remember that *never again* will I place this escape before you, so help me heaven! Choose! It is *the last time!*"

With great effort she arose. Oh! never more would I look on a face like that! Thin, haggard, white as snow, and two black, fiery eyes surmounting it, flashing forth withering rebuke.

"I *have* chosen, and, I thank heaven, it *is* for the last time. Death!"

She sank back exhausted. As she did so, the move-

ment displaced the long locks of hair hanging dishevelled around her neck and bosom, and I saw, beneath the entangled mass, what I had not observed since the night I bore her to the cell in my arms—the serpent crown. I thought of Antonio Nui. That diadem appeared fated to suggest diabolical deeds.

Excited by the wrath of defeat and disappointment, I took, suddenly, Veronica's slight form in my rough grasp, and carried her from the cell.

That in which reposed the skeleton of Antonio Nui was at the farther end of the same gallery.

Unresisting, for she was too weak, from her illness, to struggle,—with my crimson glass lantern depending from one hand, I bore Veronica to it. The door was bolted on the outside. I was obliged to lay my burden on the floor, while I drew it. It yielded easily. I entered. The skeleton was still there, chained in half-erect posture to the wall. With horrible carefulness, I straightened it to its full height, extended its arms in an upright attitude, and hung my lantern on the iron spike to which its chains were attached, that the red light should, with more fearful distinctness, display the outlines of the dead man's bony frame.

Then I returned to the miserable girl, and carried her from the gallery, within the cell itself; I placed her in such a part of the room as commanded the most frightful view.

Veronica was unprepared for any spectacle of the kind, and shriek after shriek passed, in throes of fear from her lips, as she comprehended the scene, made all the more appalling from the red light which I had so cunningly contrived to make fall, from behind, upon the pirate's remains.

When I attempted to go from the cell, she cried, frantically, not to leave her alone in that frightful place; she implored to be taken back to *her own quiet room*, and in her wild persuasion, wept tears that must have been wrung from the sources of her life.

I spurned her from me; and, with revengeful satisfaction, told her that as in her perversity and folly she had chosen death, she was now at liberty to contemplate it as far as suited her, adding, that it could not be long before she herself became like what was then before her vision.

Fastening the door, I groped my way to her late cell, took from it her lamp, that I might see the remainder of the way, and while her cries of affright echoed throughout the galleries, hastened to more habitable regions.

Suddenly, Veronica's shrieks ceased; their faintest echo died away. Surprised at this, I retraced my steps a short distance, and listened intently. All was still. Prompted by curiosity, I returned, noiselessly, to the cell. Peering through the iron latticed door, I

beheld my poor victim kneeling on the stone-floor, her wasted hands clasped in the peaceful attitude of exalted prayer. Her white, emaciated face, upraised to heaven, was beaming with the glorified intensity of her divine supplication,—the lurid light that fell upon her attenuated form, being relieved by deep and solemn shadows. Strangely enough, the scene had lost all its horror. I saw at once, that my malicious purpose was defeated. To my heated imagination, even the skeleton arms of Antonio Nui seemed extended in benediction over Veronica's holy prayer.

Early the next morning, I was suddenly awakened by my faithful servant, Pedro, and informed that he had just heard a warrant was to be immediately issued for my apprehension and committal for trial, on charges concerning both Veronica and my uncle Oliver.

Instantly I formed the resolution to leave the castle, escape if possible from the town itself, and remain abroad until such time as this excitement should have abated sufficiently to allow me to return in safety.

What was I to do with Veronica, and how should I still retain her prisoner, was my principal thought, as

I hastily gathered together for removal my money and personal valuables.

A thought struck me. Pedro was avaricious, not over-scrupulous, and completely devoted to my interests. Money, and the promise of more, if he proved himself trust-worthy, bound him, scarcely without hesitation, to do my bidding, although I must confess, his horror, when I revealed the nature of his purposed task, irritated and annoyed me. Hastily demanding from him an oath of inviolable secrecy, and thrusting into his hands an uncounted graspfull of gold, I bade him follow me below, that I might point out the cell of her of whom in future he was jailer.

The man offered not a word of remonstrance, but I could see the dews of fear upon his forehead. His whole frame shook; he trembled at the magnitude of the trust reposed in him, and the dark sin involved in such secret confinement of an unoffending and helpless woman. I half repented of my confidence in him, as together we threaded our way through the damp corridors. Just before we reached the door of Antonio Nui's cell, I turned to him, and thinking to add the force of threat to that of bribe, said, sternly,—

"Pedro, recollect, you have given me your solemn oath! Should I ever return, and find that you have violated it, by the eternal heavens, your life shall be the forfeit! Betray me, or give this girl her liberty, and,

though oceans divide us, you do not live a twelvemonth! Remember *that!*"

"Yes, Señor," replied the man, humbly, and his usually stolid features worked with excitement.

We gained the cell. With one blow of my clinched hand, the bolt flew back. The red lantern was still hanging on its spike; the skeleton yet held its fearful arms aloft, but the gloom of that lonely dungeon fell shroudily on nothing more. *Veronica was gone!*

I scarcely dared trust my eyes. The door was bolted; every thing looked the same. I began to feel cowardly fear for the secret power that must have been exerted against me, for Veronica's flight could not have taken place without assistance. The lower entrance to the cells was still, *as I believed*, blockaded, and I had in my possession the only key in the castle that opened the other. How then had she escaped?

There was no time to be lost in idle speculations. The very fact of her flight added to the imperative necessity for my immediate departure from the town. Every moment was precious.

Furiously I retrod the galleries, followed at a short distance by Pedro.

As I placed my key in the lock of the outlet door, a slight sound, as of the subdued voices and tread of many people, filled me with ominous forebodings. It might be but the servants,—I must risk it,—I could

not remain where I was. I pushed open the massive door, and, in one despairing glance, beheld my forlorn fate. Ten armed men surrounded the entrance, dressed in official uniform. I was arrested. I had been watched and betrayed by my own servants!

* * * * * * * *

One dreary day, not many months after this, as I sat alone in my prison, awaiting trial, I gradually became conscious, from something awful in the atmosphere, of the approach of that terrible scourge to southern lands —the earthquake.

A profound stillness reigned in the air over the town. It was like the repose of a tiger before he springs upon his prey.

Even within the jail walls, I knew the inhabitants of the city were profiting by the solemn and well-known warning. I could hear the echoing tramp of feet in the streets, and cries of anguish from men, women and children, as they deserted their homes to avoid the impending danger.

Despairingly I listened till the last sound died away. In vain I watched for the coming of some one to liberate me from the certain death that must reach all who remained within the prison. In the general panic of hurried departure, its inmates were forgotten—*our jailers had fled!*

As the first life-destroying boom of eruption shook the walls, I fell upon my knees, and, hardened sinner that I was, attempted to pray. I had not prayed before during many years. I know not now what I asked,—what miracle I deliriously demanded of heaven for my preservation. Alternately I strove frantically to break the fastenings of the door, by throwing my person violently against it, and shrieked out maledictions on those who, busied with their own safety, had left me to perish. My ears were filled with the savage shouts, the maniac ravings of my fellow prisoners; their curses and their prayers rent the air already freighted with death and destruction. Like myself, they were powerless; they knew the town was being forsaken!

As night fell, the deadened rumble of earth, ploughed, as it were, by a whirlwind, grew louder and stronger. We heard the fall of buildings, the crash of breaking walls.

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Morning dawned! I never knew before what a blessed thing the daylight is. Like the smile of God, day shone over the ruined town. The prison was, as yet, unharmed.

On a sudden, I heard below a cry,—a murmur of grateful joy. Straining to listen, I plainly perceived

the sound of the withdrawal of a bolt, the turning of a key, and again undistinguishable words of surprise and thankfulness.

Some one,—thank God,—had come to set us free! One by one, I heard the fastenings of the cells undone, and, with feverish eagerness, awaited my own liberation. The steps grew nearer—they ascended the stairs to the story in which I was confined! There was a rattle of keys, and the door of the cell nearest the landing swung on its hinges; amid hysterical cries of joy, its occupant fled quickly from the place.

But another door, and I, too, should have liberty!

My pulses throbbed,—my very heart ached with expectation.

Nearer, nearer they came, and, at last, the feet of the emancipator paused before MY cell.

Joy struck me dumb. I could not speak. My lips were sealed together,—the steps passed on to the next door. I tried to cry out, but by no effort of the will could I accomplish my purpose. The misery of suspense bereft me of strength,—I sank heavily upon the floor.

The jar of the fall must have attracted the attention I had so vainly sought to win. There was a hasty return—a key was fitted to the lock—the door opened slowly, and—I was *free!*

Scarcely staying to look on my preserver, in one bound I stood without the cell.

The grey light of the dawn hardly revealed the intricacies of the jail, as I passed through it, and reached, at last, its portals.

For a moment I paused upon the threshold, contemplating, in awe and fear, the spectacle of sublime ruin which the town had become. Scarcely a trace of its former appearance remained. Its homes were desolated, and mounds of still-convulsed earth usurped the places of many a stately building, while here and there a huge cavern widely distended its hungry jaws.

I gazed in the direction of the castle, but a billowy rise of confused stones alone met my eyes. Beyond where it had stood glimmered the Aro, looking in the dim light most mockingly beautiful.

I wept as I beheld. My crime had, indeed, met punishment. Suddenly, a hand from behind touched my shoulder. Turning, I saw the flowing robes of my liberator. In the darkness of my prison, I had thought him to be a monk; but, as with a quick movement of the hand, the cloth around the face was thrown back, a *woman*, in the garb of a nun, stood revealed before me!

One glance sufficed. *It was Veronica!*

I know not what burning words I poured forth

to her; they consumed their very memory in the fervor of their utterance. I do but remember how, in the true contrition that retributive night had wrought in my soul, I implored pardon for the great wrong I had done her, and, in prostrate penitence of spirit, received it. No revenge, however severe, could have filled me with the tenfold remorse that did Veronica's solemn pardon, bestowed without bitterness of feeling.

"Farlie," said her low, sad voice, "I forgive you all, even as I hope myself to be forgiven. The prayers of the Sister Agnes Dolores shall ever be yours, and in them, and her new existence, she will strive to forget her less holy one, as Veronica Lola. Our convent and this dreadful jail are two of the few buildings within the town walls on which God has not laid his avenging hands. Neither the Sisters, nor our Superior, have dared to think of flight, when so much remains to be done. The convent is filled with the sick and wounded, whom, forsaken by their friends, we have gathered together from the ruins of their homes. To me was given to-day the duty of freeing the occupants of this place."

"And why was the undertaking bestowed upon *you?*" I asked, as, in the livid dawn-light, we wended our way from the prison. "It was a perilous, a difficult task,—how did it fall to *you?*"

Her answer touched me with deep shame. Casting down her eyes, she uttered meekly—

"Because I, of all others, knew so well the horrors of a prison, and the glory of liberty!"

As we passed through the deserted town, with great difficulty finding foothold on the elevations thrown up everywhere in its streets, and which threatened every moment to separate and engulph us, we neared the burial ground, which for centuries had been the resting place of the Cordozas, and amid whose costly magnificence of monuments, tombs, and statues, reposed the remains of my uncle Oliver.

Pausing at the overthrown wall, Veronica beckoned me to follow her within the enclosure. Mechanically I obeyed, treading now on a broken antique statue, and now on the exposed and whitened bones of past generations.

She led the way, silently, to my uncle's grave. It was rent asunder. A bush of a tropical plant, the scarlet fuchsia, lay, uprooted from its gray marble vase, upon the open grave; over the white and unchanged features of the dead, rested, in awful contrast, a single spray of its long red bells.

The ground was still slightly heaving. The convulsions of nature were not yet over.

"Before we part forever," said Veronica, with the

earnestness of a seraph pleading at the eternal throne for a rejected sinner, "tell me, in the solemnity of this hour and place,—tell me, over this opened grave, and in the sight of that heaven that has given such terrible tokens of aroused wrath—tell me *truly*, if, indeed, your hand did *this*," and she pointed to the mound that, as she spoke, closed with a slow movement over the unconscious remains.

With that livid light over us, and the groaning earth beneath our feet, I knelt, and vowed that my hands were unstained with human blood.

Leaving the burial ground, we at last reached the gates of the forsaken town.

"Go," then cried Veronica, indicating, with outstretched hand, the highway leading across the plains that surrounded the city—"go, and may the Holy Virgin lead you to a purer life, and guard you in it!"

I pressed her hand to my lips as reverentially as I would have kissed the hem of an angel's robe, and we parted.

Looking back from afar off, I saw the flutter of Veronica's black garments, as she returned to her convent, and, in the distance, beheld the shapeless

mass that had once constituted a part of the wealth for which I had sacrificed so much of honor and virtue—the Castle of Cordoza.

Then I went out into the wilderness of a new and bitter life, bearing within my breast a bitter and undying remorse.

ZOE BELL'S BIRTHDAY.

"ZOE!"

"Yes, dear Mr. Gravity."

"You are twenty years old to-day, child."

"I'm pretty ancient, am I not, sir?"

"Very. It's time you were married."

"Married! don't speak of it! I am going to make a nice old maid, guardian, and have *such* jolly times, with a cat, poodle and parrot, in a seventh-story room. Married! not I!"

"Young Mr. Hooper, Zoe, is dying to win a smile of encouragement from you. Why don't you accept him, and settle down in the world?"

"Mr. Hooper! now, guardian, just imagine *what* a couple we would make! He never says a word, and I should have to do all the talking myself. Besides, I'm some three feet shorter than he is. I would be obliged to carry a hooked cane to reach his arm!"

There was a half-suppressed twinkle in Mr. Harvy's gray eyes, as he looked at the beaming, cheerful face of his young ward; a moment afterwards, his natural gravity of manner was resumed.

"I am getting old, my dear child. I want to see you under the protection of some good man before I die."

"Then I must relinquish my ideas of the parrot and my seventh story? Impossible! Am I in the sere and yellow leaf, guardian, that you speak so seriously? Is there danger in delay? Am I growing crabbed and crusty? Is my market spoiling?"

The young creature rose and stood before him, blushing and smiling alternately.

"Tell me guardian. Look at me well."

"Zoe, you are as vain as you are ——, I will not say what! you shall not have the compliment you expect."

"Then you are anxious to get rid of me, that is it. I see it all. I do not think you will succeed, guardian. I won't go."

Mr. Harvy drew her to him, and in an affectionate, fatherly way, kissed her between the eyes.

"I am afraid I have spoiled you, child; you are very wilful."

He smiled as he spoke. Between ourselves, reader, I do not believe this wilfulness troubled him very much.

Zoe settled herself at his feet, and looking up at him with a wicked gleam of mischief in her eyes, said—

"Well, if it must be, it must be, and I will resign

myself to my fate. What do you think of Harry Grafton, sir? Will he do?

A momentary flush crossed her guardian's face, which Zoe was not slow to observe.

"No, Zoe, any one but him. He is ——"

"Young and handsome, just what I was going to say, sir!"

"But not what *I* was going to say, child. Rather than see you his wife, I would ——

"Marry me yourself, sir?"

Oh, Zoe, Zoe, how could you! Do you see the grave sorrow, the rebuking tenderness in the kind face before you? Do you see that flitting shadowy trouble?

The young girl leaned her head, childlike, on the arm of her guardian, and in the same playful tone said, in reply to his reproving, "don't be foolish child,"—

"Whom, then, dear sir, shall I marry? It is leap-year,—I may ask whom I please."

"Well, Zoe, there is that young Englishman; he is handsome, wealthy,—"

"And speaks in a rich Cockney voice, that is decidedly euphonious," interrupted Zoe, imitating the tones in question, till Mr. Harvy laughed involuntarily. "No, no, I beg to be excused. I prefer my room in the seventh story to a life-companionship with 'is 'ighness in a palace. Any one else, dear guardian?"

"Plenty, little girl; there is Mr. Gray, and Mr. Lindman, the latter I know by experience to be one of the best men in the world."

"Oh, guardian, what an elastic phrase,—'one of the best men in the world!' I suppose that means a very good, insignificant and spiritless person; whose society careful mothers court, and their daughters as adroitly avoid, thinking anything is better than a bore that moralizes, as your 'best man' invariably does. However, I'll think of it! Don't despair about me, dear guardian," and humming

"Heigho, will nobody marry me!"

little Zoe Bell gathered up her Berlin worsteds, and left Mr. Harvy's study. He was a fine looking man, somewhat past the prime of life, with a grave, Greek face, in which intellect and habitual melancholy struggled for precedence.

As the door closed on his pretty ward, he leaned his head upon his hand, and fell into deep thought.

Zoe Bell was as wild and erratic a little creature as any that the sun ever shone upon, but withal, she was so winning, so *irresistibly* lovable, that none would have had her different from what she was.

Her mother had died a few weeks after her birth, and in the course of one or two years, her father, a New-York merchant, married again. Mr. Bell's

second wife had been to Zoe but a poor guide in the development of those traits of character which are so necessary for a woman content with her own legitimate sphere.

Her step-mother was an excellent and daring horsewoman. Zoe grew up very passionately fond of the same exercise, and from babyhood had led an uncurbed sort of jockey-life. Her naturally high terperament was left to take its own course, because, although dearly beloved by her step-mother, discipline of any kind was a stranger in her home.

Ungoverned and ungovernable, Zoe reached her eighteenth year.

Misfortunes then came upon the family. Having engaged in many hazardous, and perhaps not strictly honorable speculations, Mr. Bell failed, and fled from the country. After a few months his wife joined him abroad, (a want of love for her husband was not among her many failings,) and desolate little Zoe accepted her god-father's offer to share his home; Mr. Bell's death shortly afterwards leaving her totally without resource. For two years Mr. Harvy, and his kind, venerable mother, had striven, by gentle and unseen means, to soften the imperfections of Zoe's character. To them it had been a labor of love, and one that in the end was not unsuccessful; her very faults, her wilfulness, her high spirits, endeared her to them.

Zoe's beauty was peculiar,—something of the gipsey and the queen were blended in her merry face and carelessly proud-bearing, the phantom-like effect of her dark, lustrous eyes, bewildered all on whom their flashing glances fell. She was a tiny creature for such a womanly appearance, and there was much fascination in her manners—manners made up of a sort of flash-blending of mirth, good-humor, and enthusiasm.

Shortly after the study-door closed upon Zoe, Mrs. Harvy, a beautiful, silver-headed lady, entered it through a window that opened on the balcony. She was quite old, but a temperate and active life had preserved her health and strength to an advanced period. The same benevolent kindness beamed in her face as in her son's, the same mild eyes were hers, the same frank, smiling mouth—not a mouth thin-lipped, small and selfish, but one that made you think of a generous heart, as large for the frame as that mouth was for the face!

Mr. Harvy looked up from his reverie as his mother entered.

She seated herself in an easy chair, and began talking to her son on trivial subjects; but a troubled expression in her venerable face soon drew his attention, and on his earnest request to know the cause of her annoyance, she told him, with indignant warmth, of the gossiping scandal that had that day reached her

ears, regarding Zoe; how their petted darling was regarded among their neighbors, as an eccentric young woman, whose society it was best to avoid; her habit of roving alone, over the country, on horseback, having awakened the holy horror of the village gossips.

"Dear heart alive! what will they invent next?" murmured the old lady when she had concluded. "What more can they say of our poor little captain?"

This was a title she had given Zoe, in playful allusion to the young girl's established boast, that she could ride, swim, and break a colt better than any man in the country.

"What more, indeed!" spoke Mr. Harvy. "Dear mother, Zoe must remain with us no longer!"

"Zoe! are you crazy, my son? Send little, friendless Zoe away, Philip!"

He turned very pale.

"Do you not understand why, mother? Do you not see the imperative necessity for her leaving Hazelwood?"

"Poor child—poor child," said the compassionate old lady, at last,—"I see it all! If they speak ill of her *now*, they will speak worse of her in time. Her position here ——" she paused, as if to reflect. Her son took up her words.

"Her position here, as *my ward*," he said it with

much bitterness, "will not protect her good name. If I were older, mother, it might not be so,—but, stay, Zoe shall *not* leave Hazelwood!" A thought seemed to strike him. He crossed the room to his aged parent, kissed her wrinkled forehead, and said, "She shall never be taken from you, mother. She is to you as a beloved daughter. It is *I* who will go away from Hazelwood!"

"You, Philip! no, oh no—do not take from me the staff of my old age!"

"Dear mother—what then *shall* we do? I may not be gone long. Zoe, some day, will marry, and I can then come back to you."

The poor old lady hesitated, then, with a burst of tears, cried—

"You are right, my son; go, and God be with you."

Alone, in the solitude of his own chamber, the restrained passion of that proud, strong man, burst forth unchecked.

He sat there with his secret grief till the shades of evening filled the quiet room, and then descended to the evening meal.

"I am unworthy of her," he thought; "her youth,

her gladness of feeling, her beauty, all entitle her to a younger, fresher heart than I have to offer her. I will go away—I will forget her—*if I can !*"

Zoe was not present at the tea-table. She had not yet come back from her afternoon ride, and the sorrowful meal passed in unbroken silence between the mother and son, excepting once, when Philip Harvy, going to the window to watch through the darkness for Zoe's return, said slowly, as though musing aloud—

"'Unsatisfied ! unsatisfied !' is the universal cry of mankind. Let our actual happiness be what it may, we worship forever the unattained, and, oftentimes, unattainable. If we could grasp the eternal stars, we would weep for something higher and nobler for which to long and battle !"

Presently there came the sound of horses' feet on the paved court-yard. Mr. Harvy left the room to assist Zoe to alight, and a moment after they entered together, she leaning on his arm, laughing and talking as though her very innocent heart were in her words. Her black eyes sparkled merrily, as, shaking her long curls free from her plumed riding-cap, she flung herself, carelessly, on an ottoman.

Suddenly, in the midst of her gaiety, the sad faces of her benefactor and her aged friend drew her alarmed attention. Her own bright, young countenance clouded with the shadows of anxiety and loving interest.

"Dearest Mrs. Harvy—dear guardian, what is the matter,—what has happened—are you sick, faint, or ——?"

Strangely enough, Zoe addressed herself to her guardian alone, although her words were spoken to both his mother and himself. She looked at him with wild alarm, and in her eagerness, rose and went towards him.

"It is nothing, Zoe—nothing," Mr. Harvy said, faintly smiling, as he stroked her glossy hair. "I am about to leave Hazelwood for some time, that is all; I suppose I look a trifle graver than usual at the prospect of parting."

"About to leave Hazelwood!" repeated Zoe, slowly. Her black riding-dress was entangled in her feet; she stooped to gather it aside. When she arose again, her face was calm and unmoved.

"Oh, what shall we do without you? This is very sudden."

He looked at her, and thought bitterly of the vast difference between her feelings and his own.

He did not hear the rising sobs that she choked down—he did not see the hot tears that were swept away by that casual, artful movement of her long, white fingers.

"Going away!" she repeated. "Dear guardian, you will not be gone long?"

"No—not long!" he said, coldly, as a vision of Zoe's marriage to another came before his mind's eye. "I am afraid it will not be long."

He had cherished a faint, dim hope, that surprise would betray her into a display of the actual feelings she bore towards him; he had thought, if she really loved him, that some sudden look or word would, unconsciously, reveal it.

With keen disappointment he now felt that she regarded him but as her benefactor and her friend.

"I am old enough to be her father," he said, inwardly. "It is unnatural to expect her love. I will *never* ask it!"

THERE was a gentle rap, that night, at the door of Zoe's little tapestried room.

"Come in," she cried, carelessly, from her seat at the window. The door opened, and Mrs. Harvy entered.

Neither had disrobed for the night. Mrs. Harvy was evidently suffering deeply. Her aged hand shook like an aspen leaf, as, laying it gently on Zoe's pretty head, she blessed her.

"Bless you, bless you, my child," she exclaimed, fervently, "remain as good and as dutiful as you now

are, and there is *no* sacrifice we will not make for you!"

"Then this sacrifice *is* made for *me?*" asked Zoe, quickly, looking at her adopted parent with eyes of eager and penetrating affection.

The confused, regretful droop of that faded, grief-stricken countenance, told her but too plainly what she had already feared and conjectured.

On the instant, Zoe's resolve was taken. She, too, had heard the gossiping reports of the villagers, and in part had guessed the reason of her guardian's departure from Hazelwood. For months she had known that she was much more to that guardian than a ward; hitherto it had seemed something unreal, a conquest worthy merely of a passing girlish smile, or a merry thought. *Now* this great sacrifice, this proof of manly, generous devotion, womanized her; she was no longer the laughing girl; that moment made her a grateful, thoughtful woman, aye, and a loving one, too. Until then, she never knew the full extent of her attachment to her guardian. Her eyes were opened to her own heart.

She kissed Mrs. Harvy good-night, and resumed her seat at the window, as the kind old lady left the chamber. It was raining violently. In Zoe's strange mood there was affinity between her and the storm. The pattering of the drops upon the panes sounded like

music ; she experienced a strange sensation of happiness, for which she could not account. She felt elevated above herself.

For some time she sat reflecting by the dim light of her expiring lamp.

Then a sudden desire seized her to find utterance for her feelings in music. The storm without suggested the beautiful hymn, commencing—

"Jesus, Saviour of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the waves of trouble roll,
While the tempest still is nigh."

She was singing it in a subdued, sweet under-tone, when the thought struck her to go down to the parlor, and try it with piano-accompaniment.

It was still early.

Lowly humming the sacred air, she trod the long, dreary, and faintly-lighted gallery, to the stair-case, descending which, she entered the large drawing-room.

A few embers still glowed upon the wide, old-fashioned hearth, remnants of the day's fire, and guided by their feeble rays, Zoe found her way to the piano.

She did not care to light a lamp ; feeling that the twilight would best accord with her thoughts and her song, she played a soft, impromptu prelude. Warming with her subject, she continued to improvise for some

time, then, lowly, tenderly, she began the hymn. It is replete with genuine, religious feeling.

When she had finished that thrilling appeal of a distressed soul to its Maker, and the half-murmured, half-chaunted music fell into silence, a slight sound like a suppressed sigh startled the young vocalist, and

"It is only I, Zoe!" broke upon the stillness through the well-known voice of Mr. Harvy.

Turning towards the spot from which the sound came, now that her eyes had become accustomed to the obscure light, Zoe saw her guardian sitting at one side of the fire, in a large arm chair, that almost hid him in its deep embrace.

She lifted her hands from the white keys, and moved towards him.

"Sit still, Zoe, little girl. Do not stop; it gives me pleasure to hear you. It may be the last time, child!"

Oh, how that deep, half-sorrowful voice rang upon her hearing!

"Dear guardian, I would rather talk to you! I can sing no more to-night. I had not thought to have a listener. May I talk to you, sir?"

Something whispered her, "*now*, Zoe, *now* or never," and she felt she must obey.

There was a brief pause.

"Did you sing that from *feeling*, Zoe?" the kind voice asked, at length. "Did you think that the 'tem-

pest' you sung of *is* nigh; 'the waves of trouble' rolling towards you? Are you unhappy, my child?"

"*I!* No, no, how *can* I be, when you are so good to me, and protect me from every harm."

"There was a world of meaning in your voice, Zoe."

"I was not thinking of myself, sir."

"Of whom then, child?"

"Of you, dear guardian," was Zoe's candid answer.

"And why of me,—will you tell me?"

"I thought, I feared," she began, half trembling at the prospect of what lay before her to do, "I feared, sir, that *you* were unhappy. You *are* so, dear Mr. Harvy, you *are* unhappy, and I am the miserable cause! I know it, I have long known it." She hesitated.

Just then the dying embers shot forth a last flickering flood of pale light.

It shone on beautiful, glowing eyes, a glorified, because truthfully earnest face, and a slight form standing in the attitude of a Lilliputian queen before the arm-chair.

The gleam, though come and gone in an instant, revived Zoe's courage.

Mr. Harvy spoke not a word.

"Dear guardian, oh, do not leave Hazelwood! I am unworthy so generous, so noble a sacrifice!"

"Sacrifice! Zoe, you know nothing about it! What

can *you* have to do with my going away? There is but one thing that can change my determination, and that is not under my control."

"Is it under mine, sir?" asked a low, pleading voice. There was no reply.

"I do not deserve to be nearer or dearer to you than I am, but,—if a life of earnest devotion can ever repay your kindness, it is yours! I feel my unworthiness deeply, but I know you love me,—I know you are leaving your home for my sake; dear Mr. Harvy, I would prevent you if I can! *May* I?"

I regret to say, that Mr. Harvy's precise answer is not on record.

Shall I write of the happiness that the events of Zoe Bell's birthday gave to all the inmates of Hazelwood?

Shall I tell of the ever-increasing devotion of the gay young wife to her quiet and noble husband; how their days glided by in peace, disturbed for a time by the grief that came to them from a little grave, and then flowed on in unruffled contentment?

No, I will leave my story as it is. Only with the actual events of Zoe Bell's Birthday has my pen to do,

and surely none would have me meddle with that which concerns me not.

All I may add is, that happiness and kind fortune descended to the lot of Zoe, the beloved wife of Philip Harvy.

AN OLD MAN'S STORY.

"I said to Sorrow's awful storm,
That beat against my breast,
Rage on—thou may'st destroy this form,
And lay it low at rest;
But still the spirit that now brooks
Thy tempest, raging high,
Undaunted on its fury looks
With steadfast eye.

I said to cold Neglect and Scorn,
Pass on—I heed you not;
Ye may pursue me, till my form
And being are forgot;
Yet still the spirit which you see
Undaunted by your wiles,
Draws from its own nobility
Its high-born smiles."

During one of my city rambles to-day, I saw in a a large shop-window, a picture of Christ.

It was exquisitely painted; but it was not mere admiration of an artistic blending of colors that caused me to pause and look, tearfully, on the beautiful creation; and there was something of unearthly beauty in

that glorious head. The sorrowful gleam of those noble eyes, as they were turned heavenward,—the mingled resignation, faith, humility, and love, resting expressively on the lips, parted in physical agony, smote me with awe and holy pity.

I have come home now with a heart chastened from dull repining; I no longer feel the poor suffering creature that I once thought myself—I realize as I never realized before, that, compared with the agony of His thorny paths in life, *my* grief is as a drop of water to the fathomless ocean.

Complaint, henceforth, I will put far away from me, and murmurs against the Divine Will shall never more pass my lips. If *I* have found my lot hard to bear, puny as it is, what, oh! what were the matchless sufferings of Christ crucified?

Something impels me to give my history to the world.

Not that I desire fame or compassionate sympathy, but that men may learn of me pity for their fellow-creatures.

I am an old man now, as my gray hairs too plainly tell me, and I shall write dispassionately of all those bygone events, from very feebleness of age.

Early left alone in the world, there are few things that I can remember of my home or my parents. My mother, I know, was beautiful; her features were cast

in the delicate Grecian style, and her eyes seemed like dreams of blue sky; but I can recall her image very faintly. Once, I recollect, she took me with her to evening prayers, in the large old cathedral where she worshipped. Holding, childishly, by her hand, I remember staring in amazement at the vast building, fragrant with incense, and glittering with lamps, that shed fitful light on the antique paintings, the golden altar ornaments, and the flowing robes of the sonorous-voiced priests.

I seem to feel, even now, the childish, but romantic valor that glowed through my being, when my mother made me kneel on the cold marble flagging of the cathedral aisle, as the solemn and noble chaunts uprose to heaven. The dim beauty, the glory of those shadowy arches, filled me with grand desire to become something in the world; and yet I know not how my boyish aspirations discovered connection between religion and heroism, or found in the former incentive to the latter.

I am a descendant of a reviled and persecuted race. Although my features and person bear no impress of my origin, I have ever been avoided as one contaminated and unworthy of intercourse with men whom accident has given a purer descent; purer it may be in blood, but not in actual nobility of body and soul.

My mother's grand-parents were American slaves; my father claimed descent from the African race, in a still more remote degree; neither father nor mother having, personally, any of the characteristics of that people.

Both were free, and my mother was a lawfully wedded wife.

I began the world with the determination and earnest hope to overcome, at least so far as concerned myself, the prejudice existing against the race from which I sprung. I vowed, by a life of honor and integrity, to win to myself esteem, respect, and the sincere, manly friendship of my fellow-beings.

I have had the blessing of a thorough and enlightened education; for the small fortune that my father accumulated (and accumulated amid struggles and sufferings, but with a beautiful and daring faith, that his trials were not to be in vain,) was more than sufficient to meet the expenses of my youth.

In the hopeful dawn of my manhood, I did not dream of the bitterness, the weariness of spirit, my vain desire to rise was to cause me.

I did not know then, as I know *now*, that the oppressed of this world are to remain oppressed forever. I did not know that aspirations for a better and higher state, if they spring from one like myself, are to be crushed as so much sin, to the earth, which is at last

the home of both lofty and low; the noble and the ignoble alike.

In my daily business life, humiliations, which I can scarcely now brook naming, met me on every side; and, by an exquisite arrangement of the laws of *honor*, resentment was, by my birth, placed out of my power.

Once, goaded into fury by a bitter taunt, that the humanity of my nature made hard to endure, I strode to my lodgings, and going before the mirror, with a haughty tread, looked at my reflection.

"Am I deformed?" I cried,—"am I hideous or loathsome, that men revile me thus?" But the straight, proud figure I beheld was that of a fair-faced, erectly, handsome man, in the prime of his years, a man the stifled beauty of whose life none knew. Then, conscious that there was no mark of Cain upon my forehead, that I was not vile to the sight, I fell upon my knees, and wept passionately, the wild, delirious prayer—

"Oh God! *why* was I born—why was I created with this stain, making me impure in the eyes of men, though I have striven to be pure in Thine? How long, oh Lord, how long? Oh, take this burdensome life from me, or give me something to make it valuable. I hate the daylight, I hate myself,—have mercy upon me, a miserable sinner!"

After years of unwearied degradations, I concluded, that in a life of more retired labor, I might escape from the ills that had so far followed the workings of my young ambition, for not only had it proved goalless, but the friendships I sought, failed me, and the peace I desired, came not. I would, I thought, give up my vain hopes—thenceforth seek to be nothing, and thus avoid the unmerited opprobrium of those with whom my natural talents unfortunately placed me on a level.

I sought, and obtained, employment in quiet country villages; but wheresoever I went, the story of my birth followed. I was like one afflicted with a terrible disease, and was shunned as though contagion were in my breath.

Had I never sought to rise from the sphere of action, generally assigned to men of a descent similar to my own, all this would never have been. But let me ask, my reader, if such servile modes of life *could* satisfy a human being, with a whole heart full of God-like impulses, and a brain all aglow with conscious intellect?

Finding myself avoided among men, a savage hate took possession of my soul. With the same intensity with which I had once longed for sympathy among minds, elevated and refined as my own, I now loathed the mere idea of social intercourse.

I fled from my fellows, and lived, for many years, a vagabond life in the woods of the back countries, finding precarious subsistence on wild game and fruits.

The romance of this strange existence pleased and refreshed me, and in my gloomy despondency its manifold discomforts appeared trifles, compared to the mental sufferings I had previously endured.

For years I had no associates but my hunting dogs and my nightly fire. For the latter especially I entertained an enthusiastic affection; it seemed akin to my own wayward and impetuous disposition. It was to me both friend and benefactor; sitting or sleeping by its cheerful blaze, I felt that I was not without companionship. My fierce nature received it as a fitting object on which to expend its wealth of morose love.

As I glowered over its warm and flowing flame, on cold, dreary nights, I understood the tales of castaways on desert lands, who have been said to love fire with worship of idolatry; I know how to appreciate the glad gratitude they have felt for this inanimate sharer of their solitude.

Often as I watched the long streams of light, like fiery tongues darting through the darkness of gloomy evenings, I danced and shouted as exultantly as though I had indeed won myself a friend, despite the bitter world I had left, as I thought, forever.

There came to me many moments of peace and

comparative happiness during this long exile, but towards its close, there were mingled with them much discontented repining, at the unnatural lot which necessity, not choice, had brought me; and as time rolled away, I could not conceal from myself that I panted for the touch of kindly human hands, and thirsted after the love even of one of the most despised of created souls.

Gradually this longing desire filled my whole being, and turned my hitherto quiet joys into mere mockeries of the reality. The solitude that had once yielded repose to my wounded spirit, wearied and fatigued me; and my depression of mind would at last have ended, I doubt not, in raving insanity, had not an accident suddenly removed its cause.

Hunting one day, in a hilly portion of the country that was rapidly being settted, I heard, as I thought, a cry for help. On hastening to the open road, I beheld a man striving to raise his horse from the ground where it had fallen, writhing in the agonies of death. Had he been a gentleman in appearance, my misanthropic nature would have impelled me to leave the spot without rendering him assistance; but the whitened meal-sacks in his wagon, and his own flour-besprinkled attire, proved to me that he was merely a miller, journeying to market with his goods.

I advanced towards him, and offered all the aid in

my power towards extricating his horse and procuring a substitute, and by other unconscious proofs of good-will, so won his favorable opinion, that in reply to my earnest inquiries regarding the facility of obtaining employment in the neighboring villages, he offered me the then vacant place of a day-laborer in his own mill. With great gratitude at the prospect of escape from the woods, and my hunter's life, I accepted his offer, poor as it would have seemed to me at any other time.

A few days saw me fairly installed in the situation.

On the banks of a small fresh-water stream that takes its sparkling course among the hills of N——, and at length comes gurgling and dashing through the salt meadows, till it meets and mingles with the bright river beyond, still stands that antiquated and half-ruined mill. It is built in a hollow of much rural and picturesque beauty, at the feet of these lofty hills. Venerable trees nod and whisper over the decaying walls, and the brook that then turned the wheel, glitters in the distance like a long bright vein of silver.

For awhile I lived there happily.

It was there that I dreamed the vainest, but most beautiful dream of my life, and there, too, I awoke from my delusion.

Ruth Say was by no means a woman to excite the admiration of the multitude. She was good, sweet and gentle, and it was only among those who knew her

well, that her unobtrusive amiability made her beloved. She was scarcely pretty, but as I look back upon the period when she was all in all to me, I feel that beauty was needless.

Never in all my life had I aspired to the love of woman. I had put the thought always from me whenever it occurred, for I felt I had no right to ask any human being to share such a fate as mine.

When, however, I saw sweet Ruth Say fading away with a hopeless passion at her heart's core for *me*,—when I beheld at my feet a jewel I had never hoped to possess, my whole soul was drawn towards her, and I forgot the spirit of self-sacrifice that hitherto had actuated me; I had no power to put lightly aside the whole life-time of happiness offered me through her love.

She was my employer's eldest child, and although placed at the head of his large family of little ones, she was not yet twenty-two years of age.

I offered Ruth my heart and hand, and with the full approbation of her father, it was arranged that we were to be married in the ensuing autumn.

During the time that intervened, Ruth became dearer to me than my hopes of heaven.

I could not bring myself to tell her what I really was. I could not repeat to her the hateful secret that hitherto had blasted the promise of my life, and yet my

mind was torn by the consciousness of the wrong I was doing by withholding it.

One cold spring night, as we sat together at the mill-fireside, something

"—— in her aspect, and her eyes,"

prompted me to confess all. We were alone. As I watched in painful suspense the conflicting emotions that my recital had awakened, and which the light of the cheerful fire revealed on her face, I felt that her love was shaken by my revelation; I saw that pride, outraged perhaps by the long delay of that confession, was weakening the affection in which I so gloried.

I threw myself at her feet; I wept, as only strong men *can* weep, over the threatened desolation of all I held dear, and implored her not to cast me away utterly.

"Ruth, Ruth Say," I cried, "on you depends all the hopes of my life-time; take them away,—wring them from me, and you convert me into a demon. Ruth, Ruth, I love you—you are the dearest thing to me on earth! I love you as never yet woman was beloved of man. *May* I love you, Ruth—may I, oh, may I? There is no stain on my *soul*, no dishonor, no shame!"

She gasped, and was silent. I covered her hands with kisses, for something, I know not what, bade me hope. She repulsed me with dignity, and though she

trembled like a reed in the wind, said with bitter calmness—

"Why was I not told this before? why have you permitted me to love you all this time in darkness? Oh, Stephen! may God pity us both, for both will need it! I can never marry you!"

Her sweet wild eyes shot forth glances of proud scorn, as she swept from my grasp, and left me alone by that mill-fireside.

A long time I sat there in the darkness, and pondered over her words.

My heart was filled with bitterness. I thought her unjust—cruel; even as I had thought all the world before.

But never once did I harbor the passionate regret, "I would that I had never loved!"

I had no desire to undo the past. Though humbled, I had once been happy; and even to save myself from present misery, I would not have foregone the *memory* of that happiness.

In the midst of my reverie, my ear was startled by a strange and inexplicable sound without the mill. I paused, listened attentively to the dull, surging noise, and, in mute wonder, tried to imagine whence it proceeded.

The night was uncommonly beautiful, and, perhaps, it seemed more so, from the fact of its being the first

clear evening for weeks; the country having been visited with violent rain storms. The air, until now, had been calmly, solemnly still. Was it a sudden gust of wind in the old trees around the mill that thus broke upon that silence?

On—on it came—louder, stronger, and fiercer!

At first, it had seemed like the low, solemn flow of a giant's hymn, now, it shrieked and roared with the fury of a newly-awakened tempest. I felt something dash with a mighty shock against the western side of the mill; assailed by a tumult of forebodings, I flew to the window, threw up the casement, and looked out. I thought of the late prolonged rains as I did so, and of the swollen mountain streams, and in a moment realized my worst apprehensions; for by the pale, struggling light of the early moon, I beheld, far and near, a beating tossing, surging waste of water!

I felt the very foundations of the mill shake with the force of the torrent, and for a moment I despaired of the resistance of the walls.

I beheld trees and shrubs giving way like insignificant reeds, before that black, onward-rolling water, and, as I looked, realized acutely the mere nothingness of humanity.

I rushed from the room to alarm the household, and

provide for the safety of Ruth Say; my only thought was of *her!*

Consternation and dismay reigned throughout the rest of that terrible night.

During all, the moon shone forth as brightly and coldly, as though it lighted not the path of the destroying angel.

The flood did not abate as the morning neared. It became but too evident, that the banks of some of the mountain lakes had given way with the accumulations of the late rains, and an inundating tide of death was flowing upon the lonely mill-hollow!

With the daylight came attempts at rescue from the affrighted villagers.

A boat was sent to take us from the already half-fallen ruin; but before it reached the mill, it, and its brave rower, perished in the whirling torrent. We could see the dismay depicted on the anxious faces that crowded the river's edge as the boat went down, so near were we to them.

Within view of safety, and hourly expecting destruction! Every effort that man could make, was made to save us, yet the sun sank that day, and found us still awaiting rescue or death. Ropes were thrown to us with provisions, but escape from the mill by the same means was found impracticable.

* * * * * * *

In the darkness of the succeeding night, there came to me a happy thought.

I called to the assembled multitude beyond, and, receiving a wild shout of answer, bade them fling me fresh ropes, and a large, strong basket.

Aided by both, I had soon established a mode of personal communication with those on shore, and myself, made the experimental passage above the water.

Eagerly I returned, overjoyed at the success of the plan, and the children of the family, one by one, were removed from the place, until there remained but the miller, his eldest daughter, and myself.

It was in vain we entreated Ruth to go next; she insisted on her aged father being placed in safety before herself.

He gave her, at last, a fervent—oh! how fervent an embrace, stepped into the basket, and was rapidly drawn over the torrent. In a moment, glad shouts on the shore, announced the aged miller's safe arrival.

Then, once more, I begged Ruth to leave the mill.

But, once more, she refused.

Looking at me, with something of old tenderness in her tones, she said, beseechingly—

"You first, Stephen."

"*I!*" I exclaimed, scornfully. "Of what use or good am *I* to the world? Not a living soul will regret

if I never see God's day-light again, and for myself, I care not how soon my life ceases. I have lost all, Ruth, that made it of value—all, all!

I steadied the basket with one hand, and with a peremptory gesture of the other, signified to her to seat herself. She obeyed, mechanically. Just as she began to move from the tottering mill-walls, she cried out in an alarmed voice, that was prophecy itself—

"Good God! I shall never reach them alive! Stephen—oh, Stephen Lent, save me, save me! Where are you—oh, where are you—it is dark—Stephen—Stephen!"

Even while she spoke, the wall to which the rope was attached, fell with a resounding crash, into the black abyss of rolling water.

To this day, I know not how my own worthless life was preserved amid the ruins. They told me, that, two days afterwards, when the freshet abated, I was found, senseless, half-buried under a mass of the fallen wall.

So perished my only earthly love—so died Ruth Say, in the pride of early womanhood.

I HAVE scarcely seemed to live since then. I have cared for nothing, hoped for nothing. Taunts, sneers, and unkindnesses have reached me not, for I have felt them not.

My days are like the waves of the ocean, full of unrest, and changeful with currents, but I have ceased to heed their action; I look above this world's influences, leaning upon the Rock of Ages.

The tale of what men call my shame, ever follows and pursues me, like a phantom, whose shadow must mix with mine till death; the crime of ignoble birth is never to be forgotten or forgiven.

Many compassionate men and women have written of the innumerable details of slavery; and this brief recital of the trials of a descendant from one of the most oppressed people of the earth, may be but a new expression of an old form of suffering.

Laus Deo! in heaven the Jew and the Gentile, bondman and free, are eternally equal!

THE

SWALLOWS IN MR. PIP'S CHIMNEY.

"Chip, chip a we-e-e-e!" twittered the swallows in the chimney.

There were sweet winds afloat, and they flowed with almost burdensome fragrance through the windows of Obadiah Pip's little parlor, as he sat there, one afternoon, fast asleep in his chair.

It was a small and shady dwelling, overhung with green trees, and surrounded with choice shrubbery—shrubbery not trimmed into stiff circumspectness, but graceful in wild, luxuriant growth. Just within the old white-washed fence, stood a row of currant bushes, laden to the ground with their ripe scarlet fruit, and over the little time-honored porch, crept mingled rose and honey-suckle vines, whose contrasted sprays hung in thick masses upon the lattice-work.

In spite of his great, awkward person, and clumsy bashfulness, Obadiah Pip possessed something of taste and refinement. One could see that, by looking at his gardens, flower and vegetable, and at the outward adornments of his plain, but pretty house.

"Chip a we-e-e-e!" went the swallows in the parlor chimney. The sound awoke Obadiah from a profound sleep, the sweetness of which a day's hearty labor had purchased. He half arose, rubbed his eyes, and then slowly settled himself back again in his chair.

"Chip, chip a we-e-e-e-e!" still energetically twittered the swallows, overhead, and at last they put an end to good Obadiah's nap. He stretched himself lazily, gave a cavernous gape, put his hands under his coat-tails, and began to walk up and down the apartment, thinking of the three years he had lived a widower in that very cottage,—the ceaseless "chip, chip" of the swallows, making the dreary stillness of the room still more solemnly dismal. Then he went to the glass, between the windows, and looked at his reflection.

"I declare," soliloquized he, running his fingers through his hair, "it is time I put an end to Rosa's going to waste! She wants a mother to look after her; I perceive *that* plainly. Let me see;—it is three years, within a week, since my sainted Susan died in this very room. I have not led a *very* happy life in that time, I'll acknowledge, for all Susan used sometimes to say, that I,—dear me! nobody sews on my buttons like Susan did,—nobody keeps the flies off me in my afternoon naps,—poor, poor Susan!"

Stout Mr. Pip heaved a deep sigh.

"Curse those swallows—what a noise they keep up! It makes me feel like a funeral. I'll shoot them—I will! I don't have a minute's peace of my life!"

Mr. Pip slammed the door behind him and went in search of his gun; but, changing his mind, concluded to "fix," and ride down to 'Squire Jonson's to inquire into the state of his crops.

Mr. Jonson had three unmarried, plump, and pretty daughters.

Arrayed in all the glory of a "Sunday-go-to-meetin'" coat and trowsers, with the addition of the identical white vest in which he had been married ten years before, and which, consequently, was not of a very modern pattern, and *would* draw under the arms, in spite of the most strenuous efforts on the part of the wearer to keep it in place, Mr. Pip gently trotted down to 'Squire Jonson's on the back of old Fire-Fly.

Nothing in the world is as soothing to the temper as a ride, just at sun-set, over even and tree-shaded roads. Those leading to Mr. Jonson's farm, happened to be particularly pleasant, and as friend Obadiah passed slowly along, he forgot his ill humor at the swallows, and thought only of his intended visit.

To tell the truth, this was not the first time Mr. Pip had shown an interest in the weal or wo of his neigh-

bor's crops. For several weeks past, he had been in the habit of stopping there every few days, not unfrequently extending his call so far as to partake of the evening meal with the family.

Just before reaching the farm, Mr. Pip saw in the distance, the carriage of Mr. Jonson issue from his gate, and proceed in the same direction as himself, towards Meadowside. As he beheld this, poor Mr. Pip's courage evaporated on the instant.

"How on earth," thought he, "can I venture near the house *now?* Jonson and his wife are going down to the village; if I stop, I must face the three girls *alone!*"

He tried to overcome his shy horror at the prospect, and after some deliberation, concluded to tie his horse, knock at the door, and inquire for Mr. Jonson, with the same coolness that he would have done if he had not just seen him driving away. Accordingly, he walked up the neatly pebbled path, and rapped, boldly. A few moments elapsed before the door was opened, during which interval a half-suppressed giggle reached him from within.

Mr. Pip was on the point of taking flight, greatly alarmed at his own temerity, when the knob turned, and he found himself face to face with the youngest sister, Miss Mary Maria.

"Oh—ahem, how d'y do, Miss Jonson. Is your

father at home. I've just called to bring him some white turnip-seed, I promised him last week."

Miss Mary Maria's roguish eyes fairly danced with merriment, as she said—

"Father is away, Mr. Pip—walk in, and rest yourself—you must be fatigued with your long, dusty ride."

As she spoke, she threw open the door of the parlor. Mr. Pip required no second invitation; he followed her in very bashfully, and, in his awkward way, dropped into the seat nearest the door. I do not mean to insinuate, by narrating this circumstance, that he was preparing for a hasty retreat in case of necessity,—no, indeed, Miss Mary Maria was too young, too jolly, too pretty, for such an idea to enter his head. The fact was, he was quite overcome with his good fortune in seeing the young lady alone, (for of the three sisters, he liked the youngest one the best,) and so did not know exactly *what* he did.

Miss Jonson was a rosy, healthy, country beauty, of about twenty-three. Her eyes were deeply, sunnily blue, and were always laughing on their own account, in opposition to the fay-like sort of smile that flitted momentarily across her lips, coming and going like a sunbeam, set in perpetual motion. Her cheeks were perfect miracles of roundness and pinkness, and her face's expression, although destitute of intellectuality,

was the embodiment of everything brightly, sweet, and mirthfully happy.

Miss Mary Maria drew a rocking-chair before her unsuspecting victim, and,—I am almost ashamed to write it,—deliberately set herself to work to bring out some acknowledgment of his affection for her. I wonder if there ever lived a woman who did not discover she was beloved before her lover knew it himself!

Miss Mary Maria had been aware of Mr. Pip's secret for a very long time, and as she herself was far from being indifferent to the good, but uncultivated widower, (particularly as he was the only marriageable man in the neighborhood,) she determined to make the most of the present interview.

Her father and mother were gone to bring home her two elder sisters from a visit in Meadowside, consequently the opportunity could not be more favorable.

Be it known that both these sisters had openly expressed individual and separate claims to Mr. Pip's calls and attentions, each seeing through his flimsily transparent excuse of visiting their father,—each considering herself the secret object of his shy devotion.

Mary Maria had now the field to herself! It was this,—the thought of triumph over her sisters, that

filled her with merriment, and gave her zest in pursuit of the bashful widower.

They commenced with discussing the weather. Mr. Pip said it was delightful, and using this original remark, as a starting point, they soon branched off into a promising conversation, which, however, I am constrained to say, was principally sustained by the lady.

If ever a pretty little woman took pleasure in torturing her lover, that little woman was Miss Mary Maria! She led poor Mr. Pip into all sorts of arguments, and after twisting, turning, and bewildering him, and making him say what he hadn't the slightest idea of saying, ended the debate, by maliciously causing him to contradict himself! Every moment, Mr. Pip's courage lessened. He felt he *never* could speak what he so desired to say to the little creature before him. As a last resource, he touched upon the loneliness of his home.

"Miss Mary Maria," he said, and the sound of his own voice frightened him, "you do not know how dismal my house is becoming. I am thinking of moving. Rosa says she absolutely hates such a quiet little den."

"Why don't you get a wife?" laughed Maria, half from sheer mischief, half to help him along, now that he appeared coming to *the* point.

Was there ever a better chance for a man to say "will you marry me?" The bewildered widower really could not take advantage of the opportunity. He stammered out something that was quite inaudible blushed scarlet, and dropped his eyes, seemingly for the purpose of tracing out the pattern of the pretty carpet.

Miss Mary Maria then waxed indignant. I wish my reader had been there to see her elevate her little white shoulders, and slightly curl her merry upper lip. As the afternoon wore on, however, and the arrival of her sisters became momentarily to be expected, her vexation declined, but every attempt she made to bring Obadiah upon tender grounds, was unsuccessful.

At length she began to despair, seeing plainly all the while that this clumsy widower loved her, but great bashfulness delayed his avowal of the fact.

Through the open windows came the sound of wheels—in a few minutes more, Miss Mary Maria's chance of matrimony would be gone, or, at all events, weakened. Desperation nerved her to a bold and decisive stroke.

"Mr. Pip," she said, gazing fixedly in his eyes, while the sunbeam danced to and fro upon her lips, "Mr. Pip, if you love me, for gracious sake, why don't you *say* so!"

"Bless your heart, Miss Mary Maria," cried the good widower, looking greatly relieved, his round face blushing in alternate streaks of pink and scarlet, "bless

your heart, there is not another woman in the world that I *could* love!

It was at the close of a very lovely day, some three weeks afterwards, that Mr. Pip brought home his little wife. They had taken a brief wedding jaunt, and were now to settle down into sober and common-place life. Mrs. Pip was the same laughing little woman as ever. The dignities of matrimony had not tamed her down one jot,—her laugh was more silvery and ringing, and the sunbeam brighter, if possible, than before.

Rosa, wild child, had loved her mother from the very first day she beheld her.

As they sat in the little parlor, the evening of their arrival, Rosa, with her arms around Mary Maria's neck, quiet Mr. Pip scarcely knew how to express his great joy in the new mistress of his home. He took his wife's hand within his own in his tender clumsy fashion, and was just stooping to touch it to his lips, when—

"Chip, chip, a we—e—e—e!" twittered the swallows in the chimney.

"What is that?" asked Mary Maria, half startled.

"Only the twitter of some swallows, my dear," replied her husband, "and if it is'nt the pleasantest sound I have heard this year, may I never listen to another!"

And so the swallows to this day, reign undisputed in Mr. Pip's chimney.

THE STORY OF HAGAR.

"Music is the Art of the Prophets; it is the only Art which can calm the agitation of the soul, and put the Devil to flight."

MARTIN LUTHER.

"Then a glory bound her forehead,
Like the glory of a crown,
As in the silent sea of death
The star of life went down."

ALICE CAREY.

IT was Christmas eve, and as bright and beautiful a night as ever threw its shadow over this old earth of ours. There was no moon, but the sky was thick with that "faint cold starlight," of which Shelley writes so musically in one of his tenderest songs.

The snow lay on the ground to a great depth, and lately as it had ceased to fall, the night was bracingly clear, just as on a merry Christmas eve it should be!

How the cold sound of the farmer's sleigh-bells rang out on the frosty air, jingling together in musical confusion, like tribes of air-spirits clamorous for a hearing! The atmosphere seemed alive with the sound,—far and near it echoed from the white hills. The very

horses were inspired by it, and pranced over the crisping snow, frisking their long, graceful tails, elevating their ears, expanding their nostrils, and looking as if they understood and appreciated the unusual liveliness of the scene.

From the windows of the ancient farm-houses of Briartown came streams of red light in strong and startling contrast upon the snow. Dusky figures moved hither and thither; shouts rose and died away upon the wintry breeze, and merry voices found echo everywhere.

Of all canvass delineations, give me a snow-scene! I really believe, (so inspired do I feel by the mental contemplation of this one,) that if I possessed the power to wield the brush daintily, I might at this moment sit down and immortalize myself. Most melancholy pity!

Knee-deep in the snow, a woman, closely mantled, wended her way at the side of the road. She was very tall—in fact, almost a giantess in stature—and with strides, rather than steps, trudged rapidly along. The snow gave way beneath every foot-fall, yet she did not abate her haste, but walked as though her feet disdained all that they touched.

Once in a great while, the light from some Christmas fire-side fell upon her face, and though half concealed by a close woollen hood, its savage beauty, its

stern severity, gleamed out upon the darkness, startling those who passed and beheld it.

Alone, and at night, upon those roads so impassable for foot travellers!

It was a strange journey. But its fatigues, its dangers did not appear to daunt her. Once, a compassionate farmer stopped to offer her a seat in his sleigh; a brief gesture of the hand gave him rapidly and impulsively his answer.

Leaving the road, she at length struck into the untrodden moors. Upon those desert and uninhabited commons the snow had drifted thickly. It was almost madness to attempt a passage through it, but directing her steps towards a light that shone from a cottage beyond, she passed across with great difficulty to the little lane on which it was situated.

Arrived there, her desperate courage seemed to fail her. She sat down upon the door-step, and buried her head in her hands, retaining this position for more than an hour.

Aroused by sounds from within, she at length rose and knocked. The door opened almost immediately, but dazzled by the flood of light that poured into her great black eyes, she did not at first recognise James Kenworthy, the village school-teacher.

"Come in," said James' mild voice, as he stood there

holding the door; "come in, whoever you are. The night is bitterly cold."

She knew his voice in an instant. With one bound she cleared the threshold, and knelt before him.

"James, James Kenworthy, I am come back at last. For God's sake don't spurn me!"

He made a movement as though to close the door upon her. His face writhed, and a look almost amounting to hatred, shot from his eyes.

"Good God, is it *you*, YOU! Have you come back, heaven-forsaken creature, to mar the peace of my old age, as you destroyed the promise of my manhood? I thought you dead, oh, how I have prayed for your death, as the only means of saving you from farther sin!"

Still at his feet the proud woman cried, "Brother, I have *never* sinned against myself. My tastes, my desires were different from yours, but as there is a Judge in heaven, I am pure. I told you so, long, long ago, but you would not believe me. I have little to be proud of, but I *am* proud of *that*. My life has been more varied than yours. I have lived in the midst of crime and temptations, but I swear to you, I have passed through them triumphantly.

The schoolmaster's face softened. He closed the door, but did not attempt to raise his sister from her position. Averting his eyes, he began to question her.

She was beautiful, fiercely, savagely beautiful; perhaps he was wise to avoid looking upon her if he wished to reason calmly and dispassionately.

"Why have you come here, Charity? You cannot stay—you know that, do you not?"

"Oh, James, be merciful! I want to live with you—I want to be your sister again. I have exhausted every happiness that the world offered me—I am utterly miserable. My child, and you, are the only two beings on the earth, that make life ——"

"Child, Charity! Good God, have you a child? Oh, my heavenly Father, what have I done to deserve this shame!"

The poor schoolmaster's face grew purple. He wrung his hands, and paced the room with hurried and agonized dismay.

Over his sister's features there passed, too, a flood of passion. She started up.

"Shame, James!" she cried—"shame! Did I not say I am innocent? Did I not swear it? Look at me—*look at me*, and *then* cry '*shame*' again if you dare! Am *I* one to stoop from my womanhood? Am *I* one to disgrace my sex?"

She drew up her commanding person, and gazed at him, the fire of indignation burning in her eyes.

He was subdued in a moment.

"Who would marry *you?*" he said, bitterly, yet

half apologetically,—"you, a he-wolf—a man-devil—an actress!"

"Go on, brother."

"Who would take a sweet creature like you to wife—who could love you?"

"Brother—I am a widow."

He paused, evidently softened. "Who is this child, Charity—where is it—what is it like?"

"She is at school, and, like you, she is quiet and gentle. Her name is Hagar."

"Spare your flattery. You will gain nothing by it. If I consent to take you to live with me, must this girl come too?"

"Oh, James, James! If she might—if she *only* might! It is for her I ask, and not for myself. Be kind—be generous—give her the protection of your home and name. It is not support I want for either her or me—I have made enough by my profession, to afford an elegant living if I chose to prefer it. It is not support I desire. I would die of hunger before I asked it, after leaving you as I did. I now loathe my life as an actress—it was all glare, all falsehood—and I come back to beg your aid in saving my child from following in my steps. She is already attracted by the romantic illusions of the stage, and I would have her live in some quiet manner, to obliterate her recollections of both it and her mother's triumphs."

"Triumphs, Charity! Were you successful, then?"

"Yes. Have you not heard of me—have you not followed my fate?"

"No. I never sought to do so. I tried to forget you. I thought you dead—oh! would that you were—would you had died in your cradle! A play-actress With what horror have our dead parents looked down from heaven upon your self-chosen destiny!"

"I, too, have wished myself dead, again and again. God knows I have."

"Charity?"

"Well, James."

"On one condition, you and your child shall share my home.

"Blessings upon you, my dear, all-suffering, forgiving brother—blessings fall upon you; may your hearth grow brighter and happier,—it shall be my grateful study to make it so."

"You must promise, solemnly, Charity, never to return to the stage, no matter what circumstances of poverty, desire, or temptations impel you to it. Promise me, Charity,—swear it upon this Bible, once our mother's."

The tall and beautiful woman stooped to the little stand that her brother designated, and laying her large, white hand upon the Book, said, slowly and solemnly—

"I swear."

James Kenworthy appeared satisfied. He drew a chair to the fire, piled on some fresh logs, and, for the first time during his sister's visit, asked her to sit down.

She did so. It was long before either brother or sister spoke again, both, evidently, being busy with their own thoughts. James was the first to break the silence.

"Charity, are you tired?"

"No, brother."

"Are you willing to tell me something of your life since you left me, years ago?"

"Yes, certainly. It is eventful; but few words will express it."

"Begin then, sister."

"What age was I when I went away, James? I have forgotten."

"Seventeen years and three months."

"So old? Then it is twenty years ago, for I am now thirty-seven."

He looked at her with covert admiration, and said, simply—

"You do not look it."

"You know, brother, I was always a wild and wayward thing. Our still life used to gall me. It eat into my very soul to be compelled to submit to it. While, believing in your heart, that you were winning me

from evil, you held me too tight. My bonds were more than I could bear, you know how I broke them.

"I possessed uncommon talent—don't look at me so. I am not ashamed to say it, for I feel that I *have* talent. I feel it *here*," and she struck her breast, proudly.

"I possessed talent, and young as I was, I became almost crazed with my lack of opportunities for improvement. I could not hush—I could not deaden my desire for knowledge. Perhaps you remember how eagerly I purchased books with the little allowance mother left me. For awhile they satisfied my longings; but time rendered self-study disagreeable, and my desires and hopes all fixed themselves on a liberal education in this great world, which you, James, strove so vainly to make me fear.

"You already know, how, by stealth, I attended, and became fascinated with the performances of the strolling companies that visited our village, and how, thenceforth, my ambition flowed in new channels. You already know, that mad with enthusiasm, I left my home, and went to the city to seek for employment, by which to qualify myself for the stage. How long ago all this seems to me!

"By hard and incessant labor, I at length reached the goal for which I panted—I became an actress, and

then, James, it was that you did a cruel thing, and cast from you your sole relative—*how* wrong, *how* cruel, God alone knows. I was young—I *might* have fallen. When I yielded to the perverted taste that had ripened, by the unnatural and forced calm of my life, into a fixed determination, you cast me off from you, as though, thenceforth, there were poison in the air I breathed. Oh, James! if you had but won me to you, by kindness, without sternness, how different might we both have been?

"And was *I* the only sinning one," demanded the school-master, bitterly,—"was there no wrong in *you?* was there nothing to exasperate in your ingratitude and base desertion of home? *You* smothered none of your feelings and desires; was *I* to smother mine, and take you to my arms, fresh from the disgrace of your calling? Unfortunately, I am flesh and blood. I followed you and implored you to return; you refused, and in righteous indignation, I gave you up to the black fate you chose."

He arose, and stood before her, the dim candle light playing flickeringly over his grave and agitated countenance.

"Charity," he proceeded, "I tell you, I would *never* have come to you again, even if summoned to your death-bed!"

She shuddered slightly. "Enough, brother, enough;

I did not mean to irritate you. Sit down and listen, for it grows late, and I must go soon."

"Go! will you go away to-night! you, a woman, and alone?"

Yes; I fear *nothing!* I am strong and able to defend myself. I *must* go, for I burn to reach Hagar again. I cannot leave her longer. Since my husband's death our lives have been as one. You will love her, James, I am sure you will."

Her brother looked compassionately upon her as he saw the slow tears gathering in her dark eyes. She brushed them away quickly, and continued—

"My ultimate success was brilliant. I did not burst on the world as a star of the first magnitude. I had no influential friends to procure me a proper début. I began in obscurity, and worked my own way. I took the humblest, simplest parts as a beginning; miserable as they were, I threw my soul in them, and through the naturalness of my delineations, I won the attention of both my manager and my audiences. In a brief period, I attained the position I merited. I rejoice in the fact of being self-made. It is my pride, my greatest source of satisfaction, my glory! Oh, James, what can equal the moral grandeur of that *man* who, arrived at greatness, can nobly face his fellows, and utter those majestic words,—'I am self-made!'

"One of the reasons of my success was, I think, in

my peculiar mode of acting. You know I am all fire and energy. Nothing ever has, nothing ever can daunt me. My acting, they said, was like myself,—there was in it no tameness nor constraint. Unlike other actresses, I have never studied more of my characters than the mere words,—the gestures, the impulse, the passionate burst, were totally unpremeditated, and were all left to the spur of the moment. My positions, with regard to my fellow players, of course, for their accommodation, had to be studied and rehearsed; but I can safely say, James, that inspiration did the rest. Never in my whole theatrical life, have I twice enacted a part exactly alike. On this was founded my triumphs.

"I was about twenty-five when I married Charles Harrington White. He had been one of my first managers, and my gratitude for his kindness and encouragement, when I was poor, friendless and fameless, became the groundwork of the affection which he afterwards won from me. If ever man loved woman, he loved me. From trials incident on my profession, he shielded me; from temptations, he protected me, and finally from my life of excitement, he withdrew me to domestic happiness.

"I had hoped you knew of my marriage. Although I wrote to you to inform you of it, and you returned

my letters unopened, I trusted you might hear of it otherwise.

"Shortly after Hagar's birth, my husband died. Through utter want I was compelled to go on the stage again. I did so with absolute loathing, for it had grown hateful to me. But I had either to work or starve. My youth, or at least that which is unjustly esteemed youth in woman, was gone, and the first bloom of a fresh genius had left me too. My acting grew different from what it once had been. What it lacked none knew but myself; all admired, all proffered me eager praises, but sorrow thenceforth took the beauty of *soul* from my impersonations. I was offered engagements far and near. I accepted, fulfilled them, and gradually acquired a competency.

"It was for Hagar I toiled, not for myself. Had I not desired to enrich *her*, I would have chosen the lowest servitude rather than a new theatrical career.

"I know not what more there is to tell you, brother, beyond the mere chances and changes attendant on my public life. Those it is unnecessary to dwell upon: I know it would disgust you, as much as pain me to speak of them. I come to you, a worn, heart-sick woman, to ask for shelter and brotherly love—the love which in early days of wilfulness I deserted. Heaven will bless you, James, for granting it to me. From the

bottom of my heart, I feel it is more than I deserve."

She rose from the fire, drew her cloak around her, and turned to depart.

James Kenworthy followed her to the door, and opened it for her.

"Good night, Charity," he said kindly, "come back to your old home and welcome,—come back with your little child, and lead a new and purer life. God be with you."

"Good night, my own true-hearted brother."

"Are you not afraid, Charity? A few hours can make little difference in your purpose; stay where you are until morning,—do not go, Charity, I beg of you."

"See here, brother." She partly threw off her cloak, and bared a great white arm to the shoulder. "I have defended myself with this before now. I can do it again. But I do not think there is anything to dread. I came here from the railroad station *on foot*, (because I will not uselessly waste a penny of the fortune I destine for Hagar,) and not a soul spoke to me, save in kindness. A train leaves at daylight; I shall just return in time for it. Good bye, James. You have made me very happy."

She had walked a few rods upon the snow, when he called her back.

"One word more, Charity, before you leave me. This child, this daughter of yours,—is she handsome?"

"No, brother."

"Thank God! That is all. Good night."

. . .

The old man, for he was some twenty years his sister's senior, turned again to his desolate fireside, and sat down before the dying embers, to muse over the strangeness of this visit. He was mild and gentle looking, and appeared almost infirm from the effects of care and sorrow. The wrinkled lines of his face were strongly marked, and the corners of his mouth drawn into that unmistakable expression of discontent, which so often stamps the face of an unhappy man. His sister's conduct had been the disgrace of his life. It had embittered his peace, and brought gray hairs upon him in youth. James and Charity Kenworthy were born and bred in a family of rigid Methodists. Their parents had been the chief supporters and upholders of that sect in Briartown. When they died, Charity was given into her brother's care, for he was a man grown at the time. In endeavoring to do his duty as faithfully towards her, as he knew would best have satisfied his sternly religious parents, he very nearly broke her spirit. But her high temperament could not long endure such treatment; as she said herself, her bonds were more than she could bear.

It was late that night before the good man retired to rest, and even then only at the earnest solicitations of his old housekeeper, who, unaware of his sister's visit, was sorely puzzled to know what had come over her kind master.

Great was the village scandal when it was known that the school-teacher's sister had turned from the evil of her ways, and was come to live in the midst of her early acquaintances. As with one accord, an edict went out against her; her old friends, the bosom companions of her youth, passed her by in the streets without recognition. At church, James Kenworthy's pew was the beheld of all beholders—the weird-like and gigantic face of his sister, drew all eyes upon it; but none in pity—none in compassion, or encouragement.

Oh! is not woman's justice to woman a disgrace to her name?

Charity was sensible of her slights, but she was too proud to show it. No one could have guessed from the expression of those defiant features, what agony of spirit lay beneath. A stranger might have imagined, from her haughty tread and majestic carriage, that she was an empress in disguise, native nobility discovering itself in spite of attempted concealment.

James, too, bitterly felt the peculiarity of his sister's position. According to his stern principles, her reception in the village appeared but the just punishment of heaven; but inasmuch as it glanced upon himself, he found it difficult to endure, and none but himself knew the sacrifice he made in so enduring it.

One by one his pupils dropped away. The school, from being a scene that gratified his good heart, by a display of intelligent faces, became at last so scantily attended, that his labors ceased to have attractions. Charity was not aware of this. If she had known it, her generous nature would at once have impelled her to leave the place, and the shelter of his roof.

Little Hagar came under the same ban. Her mother seldom allowed her go from her; but when she did, the poor child was equally destitute of playmates. If she were sent on errands to the village, it was a pitiful thing to see the longing, wistful glances she cast on groups of children at play along the roads, and to hear the taunts they flung at her as she passed. Desolate and sensitive, she had, indeed, a hard lot, and yet she did not really know whence it arose. She was too young at first to understand the ignominy that hung over her mother's name. It was not long in dawning upon her.

James Kenworthy had learned to love Hagar very

strongly. As her mother said, she was good and gentle. Her voice was so sweet and thrilling, that in the long evenings he would sit for hours to listen to it. It seemed as if the child had a natural gift of song. From the time she rose till the sun sank behind the western hills, music perpetually floated around her. But her voice was untaught, and so it was but a rough flow of wild and uncultivated melody.

One afternoon, as Charity and her daughter were sitting on the little piazza in front of the schoolmaster's cottage, awaiting his return from his day's labor, they saw the minister, Mr. Vane, and his wife, coming up the lane. Charity, as I have said, was very proud, and equally intolerant of words of reproof or exhortation.

This was the first time, since her return, that the minister had called, and she immediately conjectured that the visit was meant for her especial benefit. When the aged couple reached the porch, she received them coldly and haughtily. The gentle old man did not seem to be at all surprised at his welcome, and, while his wife entered into a conversation with the ceremonious mother, he began a merrier one with the open-hearted child.

Mrs. Vane's manners were so cordial, and her language so unassuming and ladylike, that Charity's grandeur melted before her. When the visitors rose

to go, Charity actually found herself thanking them for their visit.

"Mrs. White," said the old pastor, as he took her hand, "we have come to-day to ask a favor of you. Mrs. Vane and myself have noticed for some time the gradual spread of a feeling of unsociability among the brethren and sisters of our congregation; we very earnestly desire to overcome it; will you aid us? To-morrow, some few of them intend spending the evening at our house,—dear Mrs. White, my Charity of old days, will you come, and give them an opportunity to desire your friendship?"

Charity shook her head. "You know I am proud, Mr. Vane. I would rather not stoop to such an experiment. The forced companionship of people who despise me in their hearts, could only give me pain."

"Well, little Hagar then—may Hagar come?"

Charity looked at her daughter, hesitatingly. Hagar's eyes were bright with desire to go. Her mother could not resist their pleading, and satisfied the kind old couple by giving the required permission.

When James came home he was very glad that Charity had thus opened a way for the formation of acquaintances, for his lonely little pet, and very thankful for the thoughtfulness of his minister.

The next day, just at nightfall, arrayed in a tiny

white dress, decked with blue ribbons, Hagar accompanied her uncle to the parsonage.

She was not the least bit a beauty. Her features were roughly irregular, and her hair of an undeniable sandy brown. Like every one else, however, she had a redeeming point, and that was her eyes. They were very dark, very lustrous, and gave a gentle and lovely expression to the whole face. In form and countenance, in genius and spirit, Hagar was very different from her magnificent and fiery parent. If not so beautiful, she was far more loveable; if not so talented, she was destined to make a better woman.

That evening at the parsonage influenced the whole of the after life of little Hagar White.

Seated at her uncle's side, the child looked around her as in a pleasant dream. The kindness she experienced from every one, was altogether a new thing to her. She had been accustomed to the sneers and revilings of the village children for so long, that a gentle word from a stranger was doubly valuable to her. The attractions of that home-like tea-table scene, too, were many, and the music afterwards seemed to her fervid imagination to be the perfection of sweet sounds.

Mrs. Vane's little drawing-room was rich in one particular—a modern and splendidly-toned piano-forte occupied one of its recesses. It was such a length of

time since Hagar had seen or touched a piano, that on this one she looked with positive awe, the ivory keys gleaming before her eyes like so many dancing fairies. Just before the company broke up, a little old man, whose odd and changeful face had been a source of amusement to the child during the whole evening, sat down before the instrument to perform. With many affectations of manner and gesture, he struck the first few chords, which opened at once into a perfect wilderness of harmony. As he proceeded, his eccentricities vanished; earnest glances shot from his eyes, and his face shone with a strange light. Young as Hagar was, she instinctively felt that the queer little gentleman was improvising. An irresistible sympathy impelled her to leave the obscure corner, where she had been sitting during the evening, and stand by him while he played that marvellous piece of inspiration.

It was really a fine thing, and full of true and actual beauties. No false positions, no inartistic arrangement were there; it was pure, unadulterated, legitimate music. Now those short brown fingers created a whirlwind, then they awoke soft winds astir in summer woods, and the next moment fashioned a little simple melody that carried tears to every listener's eyes. Hagar wept and laughed alternately. It seemed to her she had never before heard music so like language.

God bless music! It *is* a language,—a divine and beautiful form of speech between man and heaven.

When the queer little musician had finished, he turned to leave the piano, and as he did so, beheld Hagar standing at his elbow, her hands clasped together in a transport of delight, and tears still glittering on her cheeks. The old man was touched. Scarcely knowing what he did, he stooped and kissed her forehead. It was long since the unknown and poor musician had met with the like genuine appreciation.

How a man of such decided and educated genius had chosen to reside in that remote village, I am unable to say,—perhaps poverty had something to do with the matter, for he was one of those friendless Germans who come to us from Europe, and oftentimes pine away their entire lives in obscurity and neglect.

"Well, child," he said, with a slight German accent, "have you been listening? How did you like it, eh?"

"Oh, sir," cried Hagar, vehemently, forgetting alike where she was, and to whom she was speaking, "oh, sir, will you not play again?"

With a nod of satisfaction towards Mr. Vane, who was standing near and observing the scene, the little man began to play. This time it was a brilliantly pretty trifle of a polka. It was short and soon done. Hagar listened breathlessly; but when he stopped and looked to read in her childish face its expression of

approval, he only saw depicted quiet but keen disappointment.

"Eh! well, don't you like it?" he asked abruptly.

"Yes, sir—yes,—oh, yes," stammered the little girl, "but the first was better, it was grand, oh, *so* grand!"

The man's face lit up in an instant. He seized the child by the arm, roughly pushed back from her forehead her heavy locks of hair, and examining her earnestly, exclaimed, much to Mr. Vane's amusement—

"Why, the girl has got music in her, and the right kind, too!"

James Kenworthy now joined the group. He had not been an unobservant spectator of Hagar's enthusiasm.

"Come, Hagar," he asked, "before we go, cannot you sing for Mr. Vane that little song of your mothers?"

He spoke with some pride, for he knew his darling had a sweet voice, and he desired that Mr. Van Dyke, the eccentric German, should hear it.

Without demur, and just where she stood, Hagar began singing. It was a wild fragmentary ballad, that had been much admired in her mother's youth, but was then neither popular, nor deserving of popularity. Unhesitatingly, she sang it with all the child-like innocence of her heart, and that alone caused it to touch those of her audience.

In a silent group they gathered around her, little sprite as she was, and not one man or woman of the company looked on her fragile form and inspired face without feeling that she was destined for high things.

My remembrance of Hagar White's voice, even as a child, is like that of a rich and mellow flute. There was something in it, I know not what, that appealed irresistibly to the sympathies,—it was, in fact, what is called a *sympathetic voice*,—round, full, and clear as any bell. Hagar had also that gift of perfect intonation which almost renders a disagreeable organ pleasant.

When the child finished her simple lay, there reigned profound silence for a few moments. Mrs. Vane was the first to break it, and her words of commendation sank deeply into Hagar's heart.

Shortly after, the guests began to take their departure. No one, however, had generosity enough to invite Hagar to visit in their families; the prejudice against her mother being too strong to be thus easily overcome. The child herself was too overflowing with ecstatic happiness to notice this, but her uncle did, and to him it was an acute disappointment. He had hoped that her retired gentleness would have done away with all displeasure against herself; it was destined otherwise.

While Hagar was gone to fetch her bonnet, little

Mr. Van Dyke came up towards James Kenworthy and Mr. Vane, who were talking together, and very shyly and awkwardly (for he was only great as a musician) asked if Hagar had ever attempted the actual study of music.

"She has talent," said he, twirling together his stubby thumbs, "and as one who has had experience in these things, I advise that she should be placed at once under instruction. How old is your niece, Mr. Kenworthy?"

"Nearly twelve," said James, smiling. "I think her rather too young to deal with the musty part of the science just yet."

"Too young," echoed the little man, with an amusing display of indignation, "my dear sir, I tell you that the most successful musicians are those who begin to prepare for the profession in babyhood."

"But she is not destined for the profession," replied the schoolmaster, with another smile; "because a bird sings is no reason it should be caged."

"My dear Mr. Kenworthy," cried Mr. Van Dyke, as he made an excruciatingly comical bow at the door, "my dear Mr. Kenworthy, it's *in* her, and it *will* come out!" uttering which prophecy, he closed the door, but the next moment opened it again, and introducing his odd and badly-proportioned head, said—

"If ever you change your mind, sir, remember that

I herewith offer my services. It will give me pleasure to—to—" and without finishing his sentence, the good little man shut the door and departed.

There was not much sleep for Hagar that night. She had not felt as happy since she and her mother had resided in the village.

For days after, Mr. Van Dyke's majestic creation rang through her brain, its bewildering harmonies giving zest and new impulse to her dull existence.

Charity was not long in discovering the cause of the change that had taken place in her daughter.

Her step was more buoyant, and her discontentment with the quiet of Briartown less apparent, for Hagar had never liked it. Rejoiced at some prospect of making her happier in her position, Charity soon decided that she should take music lessons.

"Not of old Mr. Van Dyke, however," said she, with her usual impetuosity, when she was discussing the subject with her brother. "I won't have the child patronized by any miserable German pipe-smoker on earth. To think of his offering to instruct her without payment! I will teach him better! She shall take lessons of the highest-priced and best instructor in Briartown."

"And that will turn out to be Mr. Van Dyke himself, I am afraid," remarked James, laughing. "I do not think, sister, that he meant anything but kindness

to Hagar. He was evidently taken with her voice, and told me openly that she had talent.

"Of course she has! but that is no reason *he* should be the one to cultivate it."

When the subject was mentioned to Hagar, her joy knew no bounds. She danced about the house in perfect glee, alternately caressing her mother and her uncle, to whom she had latterly grown much attached; as for the schoolmaster himself he could not have felt a more tender affection for her had she been his own child.

An instrument, of superior manufacture, was at once ordered from an adjacent city, (for Charity was munificent in all that concerned her daughter,) and before it had been in the house three days, Hagar began a regular course of study, under little Mr. Van Dyke, her childish persuasions proving irresistbile as to his engagement.

Several years passed; they were the happiest of Hagar's life.

By earnest devotion to the art she loved so well, she was becoming a good musician,—to make a really great one, a much longer period is scarcely sufficient.

Hagar's genius was peculiar. She never attained much perfection in instrumental music; it wearied, without absolutely interesting her. Melody, and not harmony, was her glory; yet she played tolerably, and

in her knowledge of the science itself, did brilliant honor to her master.

Never before had a pupil so delighted Mr. Van Dyke as she did, by cordial application and quick perception of the spirit of his instructions.

During all these years, Hagar remained friendless and companionless. Although entering woman's estate, she had not a young acquaintance in Briartown. Perhaps it was better that it should be so. Communion with the small minds of an obscure village, would but have shackled and depressed her own.

About ten miles from Briartown was the country-seat of the Randolphs, a wealthy family who resided there during the summer months.

They were known far and near, for their haughtiness, their exclusiveness, and their charity.

Universally disliked by the farmers, whose own ideas of pride were continually wounded by them; only among the very poor were the Randolphs beloved.

Mrs. Martyn Randolph, the widowed head of the family, was a stern, cold, but benevolent woman. Although she refused all intercourse with the neighbors around Randolph Farm—although she declined the slightest approach towards an acquaintance, she was a frequent visitor in the houses of those strug-

gling against sickness or poverty. There, she was all kindness, all gentleness, and full of thought for the alleviation of distress. I do not think she was one of those, called professional reformers—those who go about doing good for every other reason than the right one.

She was really and truly a charitable woman; unbending and haughty to those she deemed beneath her in position or education, but an angel of mercy to the suffering and needy.

In her own right, Mrs. Randolph was wealthy, and her husband's property was so bound, that only at her death could it descend to her children.

She had one daughter, and some three or four sons, all of whom were being educated in the severest manner. Every accomplishment that she deemed light or trifling was denied them by the stern lady; her daughter had never laid eyes on a French verb, although both she and her brothers spoke the Latin tongue with tolerable fluency. The eldest son was just leaving college, a model in his mother's sight of all that was great and noble.

Randolph Farm was charmingly situated. None could excel it in magnificence of prospect over land and water. The mansion itself was erected on an eminence near the banks of the ———, and commanded a fine view of its winding course for many

miles beyond where its blue waves laved the rocky shores of Briartown. The grounds immediately surrounding, were laid out after the English system, drives, walks, and artificial lakes, being introduced wherever they were deemed necessary for effect.

On occasional elevations, the trees were felled, to allow views of the surrounding country, of the distant hills, blue and hazy from remoteness, of the nearer ones, looming up in gigantic loveliness, or of those bright waters flowing outward to the main, skirted alternately by the white house-tops of villages, and dark masses of wild, tangled woodland.

It was the perfection of an American country-seat. The soil was rich, and the brushwood foliage almost too savagely luxurious for healthy beauty. All that wealth and taste could do to keep the place in good condition, was bountifully exercised.

The late Mr. Martyn Randolph—much to his wife's horror—had been, in his time, something of a sporting character. During his life, the stables were always well filled with animals of the rarest and most valuable breeds; but comparatively few of them now remained, and his sleek hunting-dogs wagged their huge tongues in spiritless inactivity.

The grounds were plentifully stocked with deer and various smaller game. Since Mr. Martyn Randolph's

decease, by his lady's orders, the report of a rifle had never alarmed their security.

Jacqueline Randolph, the daughter, was a tame, inoffensive girl, of about eighteen. Her mother, by unnatural severity, had reduced her to a state of such dead passiveness, that many deemed her stupid. A greater mistake was never made. Quiet good sense, and many observant faculties, were among her store of brain-possessions, while her heart was equally rich in unobtrusive goodness.

Jacqueline had but one passion in the world, and that was for music. From childhood she had lived and thriven on it, and at eighteen she was a very passable instrumentalist. Between Hagar and Jacqueline, there arose a sincere and cordial friendship, from the first moment that they met, as students, under Mr. Van Dyke. As Hagar was the old man's best pupil, in voice-management, so was Jacqueline his most forward and tasteful player.

Hagar was almost a woman before they knew each other. At first, she refused the entreaties of her friend to visit her, for the older she became, the more sensitive she felt about her own and her mother's position. Every day exaggerated it in her eyes; from long endurance of disdainful neglect, the poor girl had begun to fancy she was unworthy of anything else. Besides, her proud mother infused the idea into her, that the

rich should make the first advances, when they desired the society of the humble; and as Jacqueline had never done so, by calling at the cottage, the acquaintance rested where it began.

Chance, and an odd adventure, brought them nearer together.

James Kenworthy's health, for the last two or three years, had been gradually failing. His sedentary mode of life, had sown the seeds of a consumption, that was, by painful degrees, developing itself in his system. Growing slowly, but surely weaker and weaker, he was obliged, finally, to give up his labors at the school-house—Charity's little fortune necessarily becoming the support of the whole household. Then it was that the real loveliness of Charity's character developed itself.

The most feminine of women were never gentler nurses at a sick bed than she. The tenderness of her patient devotion to her brother was pleasant to behold, and her unwearied care over his dying bed, a tearful proof of her gratitude for all his forbearance and unwavering kindness, although she never knew the half of them.

A generous man is one of the most god-like of human creatures;—a man not merely generous of gold, but of sacrifices of self. James Kenworthy was both.

His was the charity that "vaunteth not itself," but leaves a shining track in secret places.

Late one afternoon, Hagar being much exhausted with incessant watching at her uncle's side, (it was during the last few weeks of his existence,) gave up her post to her mother, and went out for a brief taste of the fresh summer air. One end of the schoolmaster's little farm extended to the river edge, and there, on the brow of the cliff, under a group of gnarled apple trees, he had built a rustic seat, of cedar branches, for Hagar, when she was a wee child, and had first come to live with him.

With a saddened and heavy heart she now went there, to sit and weep over her coming loss. He had been to her a father; he had educated her; he had quelled her youthful follies; *he had loved her;* and Hagar threw herself at full length upon the grass, and with her head upon that dear old seat, wept bitterly. It was her first real sorrow. Like all first emotions, it was deep and passionate.

The shades of night beginning to gather, she at length rose to go home. As she did so, the holy calm of the darkening twilight, the peaceful serenity of the scene, stilled her wild agony, and seating herself on the cedar bench, she gave her grief vent in solemn and religious song. Out on the silent air, she poured

that flood of passionate and expressive melody—Shubert's glorious "*Ave Maria.*"

It seemed to her she had never sung it so from her soul as she did then. Slowly and grandly the majestic creation rolled from her lips, unconsciously interpreted to its highest meaning. It would have done old Shubert's heart good to have heard the beautiful voice of that young girl giving such regal glory to his immortal composition.

Silently, while she sang, an unseen audience gathered below the cliff. It was composed of the occupants of two or three pleasure skiffs, who, attracted by the sound, paddled softly under the bank, and paused on their oars to listen to that wondrous music.

In one of them were the Randolphs, and some of their city guests.

When Hagar had ended, and the last mellow note died thrillingly away, a burst of enthusiastic and rapturous applause startled the silence. Although unseen, she had not been unheard, and, like a frightened thrush, Hagar flew home to her nest.

She found her uncle much worse.

Beside his couch of pain, she watched the whole of that summer night.

A few days after, there came a grand equestrian party of ladies and gentlemen, from Randolph Farm, down to the cottage. Hagar saw them before they

were fairly arrived, and ran to her room to smooth her hair. They did not all alight; Jacqueline only, with one of her brothers, came in to see her bewildered friend, who could scarcely answer her kind and solicitous questions for looking at the fine horses that were curveting without,—the nodding plumes, and the graceful women.

Miss Randolph had come to beg Hagar to spend a few days at the Farm.

"My dear little girl," she cried, as Hagar shook her head doubtfully, and opened her lips to speak; "my dear girl, I will not take 'no' for an answer. You are looking miserably; you need rest and quiet. I shall not keep you long, and when you return, you will be all the stronger to care for your uncle. Beside, my mother bade me say she will herself supply your place, either for day or night watches. Come, Hagar, say you will go;—you look *so* pale!"

Charity entered the sitting-room at this moment, on her way to the kitchen, to concoct some broth for her patient. Miss Randolph appealed to her very earnestly for permission.

"It will be so great a benefit to her, Mrs. White," she added, "for Hagar is certainly preparing for a severe illness. She wants air, exercise and change of scene."

Charity seemed to hesitate.

"Would you like to go, my child?"

"Yes, mother, certainly I would," Hagar replied; "but I cannot think of it. What if uncle should ——," and she stopped suddenly, afraid to say the word expressive of her meaning.

"Do not fear *that*, Hagar, dear! He will be spared to us for many weeks yet. You are really sick, yourself. Go, my child—I would not lose you *both!*" and Charity left the room to hide her coming tears.

"When shall Van Zandt and I drive over for you, Hagar, love?" asked Jacqueline, turning slightly from her friend to her brother, as though to request his willingness, for Jacqueline stood almost as much in awe of her elder brother as she did of her mother.

"To-morrow, if you choose; but, Jacqueline, I *must* return the next day but one. You have all these guests—I shall be but a sorry clog on their amusements, and I shall be unhappy myself, to leave uncle longer."

"So be it, then," kissing her pale cheek, "and do not fear but that you shall remain as quiet and retired as you like."

Mr. Van Zandt Randolph touched Hagar's small hand with an air of chivalric reverence, and in a moment more, Jacqueline and he were in their saddles, and the whole cavalcade winding up the lane.

They had come and gone like a dream! so thought

Hagar, as she went to her room to look over her wardrobe, which, though not extensive, was choicely and delicately fashioned.

The next day brought with it Mrs. Randolph and her son. Mrs. Randolph had come to take Hagar's place, while she remained at the Farm. Nothing but charitable motives could ever have induced that haughty woman to allow her daughter to visit at the cottage. She knew Hagar's health was failing, and it was that alone that had decided her to sanction the whole proceeding.

Charity was not over pleased at her coming; she hated her instinctively. Very wisely she held her peace, however, and received her something in the style that a sultana would greet a vassal. At first, she declined Mrs. Randolph's assistance altogether.

When once, however, that lady's mind became fixed on the accomplishment of a good deed, nothing could turn her from her purpose. Therefore, Charity's magnificent condescension might as well have been wasted on the winds as on herself. She received it very patiently, gently entreated to be allowed to remain, and not once gave her tormenter an opportunity to see that she was annoyed. As a soft word turneth away wrath, so, before the visit was over, Mrs. Randolph succeeded in gaining Charity's good will.

Hagar enjoyed her long ride to the Farm very much.

It was a charming day, and the roads free from dust, owing to a shower having fallen in the morning. Everything looked so green and peaceful, that the poor over-tasked girl was gladly, thankfully content that she had come.

Mr. Randolph was very kind to her, and took much pains to point out the landscape beauties of the country. When they had nearly reached the Farm, Hagar mustered courage to ask him who were all the grand ladies and gentlemen whom she had seen the day before.

Mr. Randolph laughed.

"Did they look grand, Miss Hagar?" he asked. "I hope you will have reason to think so when you know them better. Did you notice a pretty lady, in black?"

"With a long, dark feather in her riding hat?—yes."

"That was Miss Linda Locke; did you think her handsome?—she was quite a belle at the South last winter."

"Locke, Mr. Randolph? is she any connection of Mr. Locke—Jacqueline's Mr. Locke?"

"Yes, a sister. So Jacqueline has told you about Norman Locke? did you know she is engaged to him?"

"Yes," replied Hagar, simply. After a pause she

added, earnestly but half fearfully, as though anxious not to offend,—"Mr. Randolph, do you really think Jacqueline *loves* Mr. Locke?"

He looked surprised for an instant, and then said, "I do not know—I suppose so, or she would not have promised to become his wife; still water runs the deepest, Miss Hagar, and Jacqueline's love for Mr. Locke may be on the same principle. The truest love is that which endures with fewest open acknowledgments."

"What is Mr. Locke like?" asked Hagar.

"My dear Miss White," said Van Zandt, laughing again, "there you puzzle me. I never was able in all my life to make a mental dissection of a man's features. I cannot tell you the color of his eyes or hair, to save myself. He is not at all handsome, but is a right good fellow notwithstanding; and here he comes with Jacqueline. I am sure you will like him quite as much as we do."

Surely enough, Hagar saw them advancing up the road. She little knew she owed her present visit to the influence of this very Mr. Locke! They were on horseback, and Jacqueline looked really pretty, from an unusual expression of animation. After a cordial welcome to Hagar she introduced Mr. Locke. Hagar and he exchanged bows, and then both riders turned their horses' heads to accompany her to the Farm. Jac-

queline's future husband seemed to Hagar to be rather stern and forbidding in aspect, and what little he said during the remainder of the ride did not change her opinion for the better. That he was much older than her friend, she saw at a glance.

Hagar was spared an introduction to the other guests that night, as she seemed too fatigued to endure further excitement. Jacqueline installed her, quietly, in a little room next her own, and spent the entire evening with her herself. A happy evening it was, for the two young girls talked over all the incidents of their first acquaintance, laughing about Mr. Van Dykes' eccentricities as odd sayings, until at last they ended by wishing that he might some day get a good little wife to tame and humanize him.

When they separated for the night, Hagar's last thought was of the great difference of temperament that existed between Jacqueline and her elder brother, and she could not help wondering how the chilling influence of their mother's society had not affected the spirits of the one as they had those of the other.

The next morning Hagar, as was her wont, rose at daylight, and sallied out for a walk. Her friend was still sleeping when she looked softly in upon her, so she did not disturb her repose.

It was a cool, fair dawn. She had never felt so like a ramble, and as it was so early that no member of the

household was astir, at her leisure she wandered over the well-ordered grounds. On many a grassy knoll she paused to look at the beautiful views of undulating country, that, lying beneath her feet, were just indistinct enough, from the faint morning mist, to possess a delicate and refined beauty. They were landscapes for an artist's pencil, and Hagar had enough of an artist's soul to appreciate them.

Through the moist wood-paths she wandered, with that delicious sense of freedom which only a walk at early dawn can invoke. Here and there a pink-eyed rabbit peered at her from under the bushes, and once a graceful, but startled deer, fled across the walk, and escaped into the brushwood with as much trepidation as though the ghost of Mr. Martyn Randolph himself were following in full chase.

Coming to a bench, near an opening in the trees, she sat down to rest.

So intent was she on the new and exquisite prospect her position revealed, that she did not hear the fall of feet upon the path behind her, nor until a voice at her side ejaculated a "good morning," was she aware that any one had joined her.

Looking up, she beheld Mr. Locke.

"You are one of the early birds, I see," he said, smilingly, seating himself at her side, "but are you not afraid this wet grass will spoil your song?"

"Afraid! not a bit," answered Hagar, confidently. "I am as used to the dew as are the flowers. It cannot hurt *me!* I am a country girl, you know."

"You do not look much like one; your face is too pale; and now," added he, "it is the color of a blush rose."

Hagar was amazed. She could scarcely recognize him as the same man. So quiet, even so taciturn last night,—so cheerfully talkative now.

"And you are the nightingale we heard the other evening," he proceeded, "you are the songstress that takes up abode in hedges and apple-trees, to keep folks awake o' nights!"

"I sang because I could not help it," spoke Hagar, and she thought of her uncle.

"Yes, the song was there, and it wanted vent," he said, looking at her curiously; "I knew that when I heard it. Are there many more like it where that came from?"

"Plenty," she answered, laughingly.

"Well, little nightingale, turn lark, and wake your lazy kindred,—won't you? There is'nt a bird abroad yet. Will you sing for me?'

"Yes," cried Hagar, innocently, "if you promise not to look at me so, Mr. Locke."

"There, I turn my back. Do not be afraid, little birdie, I'll not look at you for the world."

Hagar sang.

It was an unfortunate selection, and there were parts of it in a difficult minor key, which properly should have had an accompaniment. She did not execute it well, and felt mortified at her failure.

"Did I not say dew was bad for nightingales?" asked Mr. Locke, when she had finished. "Come, Miss White, do not sit here any longer."

"I am not going back to the house this hour," replied Hagar, resolutely, as he held out his hand to assist her to rise.

"Why not? I wonder if nightingales are ever obstinate!"

"They do not breakfast at the Farm until seven,—it is not yet six," (looking at her watch,) "and I am going to finish my walk."

"May I come with you? *My* walk is in a dreadfully unfinished state, too!"

Hagar hesitated, she scarcely knew why, but she felt annoyed, and longed to be rid of her companion.

"I would rather go alone."

There was a slight change in his voice, as he said—

"Very well, birdie, *go* alone. I will not trouble you. I shall march straight home to tell Jacqueline of you."

"I'll tell Jacqueline of *you*," retorted the inexperienced Hagar, half laughing, half seriously.

"Tell her, little lark, tell her! Sing her a song about green-eyed monsters. She'll understand. *Au revoir.* Don't look behind you in your walk, birdie, because you will not find me there!" and humming an opera air, he turned in the direction of the farm-house.

When he was fairly out of sight, Hagar trusted herself with a hearty laugh, and decided, mentally, that Mr. Norman Locke was very odd, and not half worthy of her friend Jacqueline.

"What did he mean by green-eyed monsters, I'd like to know," she said aloud.—"Oh, I am afraid he thinks I am a weak characterless girl, with whom he can amuse himself as he chooses. He shall find his mistake. I will be as cold and dignified as Jacqueline herself."

She pursued her walk as far as she desired, and then by an opposite path retraced her steps. On reaching her room, she found that her young hostess was still asleep. After some consideration, she determined to say nothing whatever of having been out; her reason for this was more instinctive than real,—she could not herself have expressed it in words. Her dress being somewhat soiled, she made a fresh but hasty toilet, to which she was giving the finishing touches, when Jacqueline awoke, and called to her from the other room, "to know," as she said, "if she were asleep."

The girls were soon dressed, and descended together to the breakfast-room, for the bell had been rung some time. With one or two exceptions, all the visitors at the Farm were already there. Hagar went through the forms of introduction, and sat down in the seat Jacqueline appointed her, between Miss Locke and Van Zandt Randolph.

Every time she raised her eyes from her plate, she met those of Norman Locke, who sat opposite, and who kept glancing at her continually, with a great deal of quizzical meaning.

A Miss Morton, who was at the other end of the table, happening to remark that she had seen Mr. Locke going out very early that morning, the conversation turned upon the habit of walking before breakfast. Mr. Locke said he approved of it highly, particularly when there were any larks about.

"Larks!" exclaimed his sister, "what *can* you mean, Norman?"

"O, nothing, Lin, ask Miss White, perhaps she knows."

"Miss White," said Linda, turning to Hagar, "have you any idea what my horrid brother is driving at?"

"None, I assure you," replied Hagar, trying vainly to repress her color and girlish indignation.

"I hope you did not get your feet wet this morning,

my dear Miss White," carelessly, said Norman, as he peered over at her.

"Feet wet! good gracious, Hagar, have you been out in this heavy dew?" demanded Jacqueline, "why have you not mentioned it to me?"

"I did not go very far," faltered Hagar, "and as you were asleep when I came in, I could not speak of it, of course. I suppose I must have forgotten it afterwards."

"Miss White is probably fond of *solitary* rambles," pursued the relentless Norman. "I saw her this morning walking on Glade Path with something of the speed of lightning."

"And something of its brilliancy, too, I am sure," said a chivalric gentleman at Norman's elbow.

"That's right, Fulton," cried Mr. Locke, as he reached the biscuits; "I thank you for it in Miss White's name."

"Look here, Norman," exclaimed Van Zandt, rather gravely, if you do not stop talking at Miss Hagar, we'll have a battle. Jacqueline, why don't you keep him in order? Put him under the table."

"Pooh!" cried his sister, somewhat broadly, "He will not find *that* anything new!" She rose from her seat, and going to the window, called to the hunting-dogs, who were gamboling on the piazza.

"What fine animals," remarked Hagar, anxious to divert the conversation into a new channel.

"Are you fond of dogs?" asked Mr. Randolph.

"Yes, very. Those are noble creatures."

"And horses? do you ride?"

"A little,—a very little."

"We will get up a party to-day, then. Riding is one of Jacqueline's delights. You must ask her to give you some lessons. She'll make a capital teacher, will she not, Locke?"

"Yes, indeed, as fine a teacher as I am sure Miss White will make an apt pupil. Why cannot we have the horses out this morning, Van Zandt?"

"Why not, indeed. What say you, Miss Hagar?"

"I am all willingness."

"And you, Linda?"

"Ditto," replied Miss Locke, with more brevity than elegance. She was an odd girl. I do not suppose there ever was another with as much innate refinement, who cared as little for its external display. She was one of those original, strongly-willed young creatures, who make either very bad or very good women.

Shortly after breakfast the party set out. Hagar was attired for the occasion in one of her friend's riding-dresses. It was a dark green summer-cloth, and fitted her like a charm. Though she could never look other-

wise than very plain, there was about her an air of quiet self-possession not altogether unattractive.

Jacqueline asked Hagar, while they were dressing, how she liked Norman Locke.

"I scarcely know as yet," she replied, "but I am inclined to think he is both very witty and very well educated."

It was all she trusted herself to say.

"Now, Miss Hagar," cried Mr. Locke, whip in hand, as the two ladies came out on the front piazza to wait for the horses, "now, Miss Hagar, if you will allow me," (with a deep bow,) "I am going to be your escort and *cavaliér servénte* for the ride."

"Softly there," said the voice of Mr. Randolph, as he joined the group. "*I* first invited Miss Hagar to ride, and I shall take upon myself the honor of her escort."

"There will have to be a dividend declared, I am afraid," laughed Norman, as he assisted Jacqueline to mount, "for I shall not consent to any such proceeding."

"O, Mr. Randolph," said Hagar, softly, "please don't let me ride with him."

Van Zandt smiled, and said, "So ho, you do not like him, eh?"

"No, he annoys me so much!"

"Try not to mind him, Miss Hagar. He doesn't

mean the least harm in the world,—it's only because we spoil him here, and let him do as he likes. I will ride by you, however, and see that he does not tease you farther. Where's Linda, and the other ladies,—are they not yet dressed? The horses are waiting."

He put her in her saddle, gave her some quiet directions about the use of the curb, and turned to aid the gentlemen to mount the ladies who had then just arrived.

It was a long time since Hagar had ridden; yet, weak as she felt, she thought the exercise might benefit her, as of late she had been so much confined to the house.

Seeing that Mr. Locke had left Jacqueline for a moment to assist the others, she rode round where her horse stood to ask about the spirit of her own.

"He is as tame as a kitten, my dear," was Jacqueline's response—"you are just as safe as in your rocking-chair. Bless me, Hagar, you are holding the curb instead of the bridle. Wait a moment, I will make Romeo come up to you. There, you had better let the curb rest on the pommel altogether, and only hold the reins. Now let's try a trot down the avenue while they are getting ready."

Touching Romeo, away she went on a beautifully even trot, Hagar following a little behind.

When they returned, every one was ready. Mr. Locke led the way with Jacqueline, followed by Van Zandt, Hagar and Linda abreast, the rest riding *en masse*.

A short distance without the gates Mr. Locke paused, to ask in what direction it was most desirable to go.

"Why not to the Falls?" inquired Jacqueline.

"Or over that mountain path we explored the other day; either is charming," put forth Linda.

"Our little friend there is not as yet able to stand the mountains, I am afraid," said Norman, looking back at Hagar. "Linda, can't you keep that animal in a line with the rest? Where is your whip?"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Linda, tossing back her head, and throwing up the whites of her eyes in burlesque dramatic style, "I've dropped my golden-headed whip!" and she turned her horse's head, Van Zandt following her to look for the missing article.

Hagar was thus left alone. She saw Mr. Locke speak to Jacqueline, and then they both reined in until she rode up to them.

"There they come!" cried Jacqueline, looking back after a few moments had passed, "and I am going to trot Romeo out to meet them."

"So, birdie," said Norman Locke, when she was fairly gone, bending to the little figure at his side,—

"So, birdie, we are not to be friends, eh?—is it so?"

"I have not said so, sir—have I?"

"No—but you have thought it! I will make a much better friend than an enemy, Miss Hagar," looking at her significantly. "Do you think, you innocent songstress, that I did not hear what you said to Randolph on the piazza?"

Hagar spoke not, but blushed deeply and painfully.

"I want you to like me, Miss Hagar. I desire to be friends with you. If I annoyed you this morning, I am very sorry. You started me yourself, you know. I was as peaceable as a lamb, until you refused to let me walk with you. Shall we, or shall we not, be friends?—I await your decision." He bent down his black eyes full upon her. Trembling, half with fear, and half with a sensation she knew not how to analyze, she answered faintly—

"Friends, Mr. Locke—friends, certainly."

"Well, then, let us touch hands on it." He put out his own.

"No," said Hagar, drawing away and blushing, "not now, I cannot."

"Why not?"

"Because they are all looking at us," and she felt regret for her words as soon as they were spoken.

Something very like triumph passed over Norman's

face. He said nothing, however, for just then the absent trio rejoined the party, and Jacqueline took her place at his side.

"Miss White will ride with *us* for a little while, Randolph; Jacqueline and I are going to keep her," cried Mr. Locke, as Van Zandt came up. Hagar saying nothing to the contrary, Mr. Randolph fell back, bringing his horse abreast with Linda's, who commenced giving him an animated description of a wolf hunt, in which she had once joined.

"That is about the twentieth time I have heard Linda tell that story. The girl is proud of it I believe. Are you afraid of wolves, Jacqueline?"

"Never having seen one, I cannot say whether I am or not," she replied, smiling.

"Are you, Miss Hagar?"

"Yes!" and she stopped suddenly, as though she had been on the point of adding more.

"Hagar was going to say something about sheep's clothing, I know she was," cried Jacqueline—"I saw her lips move."

Mr. Locke laughed, and turned towards Van Zandt to ask if they should go to the Falls.

"Yes," said Van Zandt, "if the ladies are all willing. Have you ever visited them, Miss White?"

Hagar replied that she had not.

"Then, that decides it; and now, let us have a

general race. Come, ladies, give us a touch of your quality."

And away the whole party went, like so much chaff before the wind,—horses and riders equally excited in competition, one with the other. Hagar was the first that checked her speed; the others gradually followed her example, laughing and panting from their late exertion.

Mr. Locke being slightly ahead, Van Zandt Randolph joined Hagar, and entered into a pleasant conversation that lasted until they reached the Falls. They talked of books, pictures, and music. Van Zandt compared the three, and analyzed their separate attractions, in so masterly a manner, that Hagar was delighted. But one thing he said dissatisfied her, and that was, when he expressed a greater love for books than music. She had lived more in a world of music than of literature, consequently she could not comprehend his taste, or understand his sincerity.

Arriving at the Falls, every one dismounted, because, to see them in their full perfection, it was necessary to descend the rocks, into the ravine, and look at them from below.

Hagar had never beheld anything half so beautiful. The wild dash of water over the gray old rocks, flinging jets of diamond spray hither and thither, had an inexpressibly charming effect. The body of faint

mist that arose from it, floated off among the surrounding forest-trees, like the great white wing of a water-angel; at least it seemed so to Hagar. She could have stood for hours and looked at it without weariness.

One of the ladies found an Indian arrow-head in a crevice of the rocks, and gave it to Hagar as a memento of the spot. It was wrought out of stone, roughly, but symmetrically. Hagar kept it for many years among her treasures, and never looked at it, without feeling something of the pleasure she had experienced at the Falls themselves.

The return home was very pleasant.

Mr. Locke made no attempt to join or speak to Hagar during the whole ride; but was very attentive and gentle to Jacqueline.

Hagar rode between Linda Locke and Mr. Randolph, and had she not been excessively wearied, she would have enjoyed greatly their lively word-battles.

When they reached the Farm, however, an hour or two of rest refreshed and restored her sinking spirits. She felt like another creature when Jacqueline led the way to dinner, which was very tedious with Mrs. Martyn Randolph's inviolable regulations.

In the evening, they assembled in the drawing-room, and some of the ladies played and sang.

As Jacqueline had avowed her intention of making Hagar retire early, in the beginning of the evening, Mr. Randolph asked her if she would not sing for them then.

Readily signifying compliance with the request, as with one voice, there arose a demand for Shubert's "*Ave Maria.*"

It had become sacred to Hagar since the night she had so poured out her soul in its supplications for divine pity. She felt she could not sing it then and there, before that group of careless triflers, without wounding her own feelings.

No one but Norman Locke appeared to understand her reluctance, and she was really grateful when he declared aloud, that he would not allow them to ask for the perpetration of such unexampled desecration.

He spoke as though he dreaded to hear it himself.

Hagar sang instead, the ancient ballad of "Auld Robin Gray," and a brilliant Italian *bravura*. Then she gave place to Jacqueline, whose gracefully easy touch, and evenness of execution, were always welcome. Unperceived, she left the warm, highly illuminated drawing-room, and passing out on the balcony, sat down to think over the day's adventures.

The cool river breeze swept over the spot with grateful freshness. She was faint and feverish from

too much excitement, and leaning her head against the wall, dejectedly longed to be at home again.

She could not chase away the sense of ingratitude that smote her for passing so happy a day, while her uncle was on his sick bed, lonely and sad.

The flood of blended light and music that came through the open casements, jarred on her feelings; she felt as though she could have flown to reach the beloved sufferer.

Jacqueline soon came in search of her.

Even by that uncertain light, she saw her friend was not well, and kindly insisted on accompanying her to her room.

Norman Locke was standing at the door as they advanced towards it together, after Hagar had bid a general good-night. He did not speak, but with a silent and low inclination of the head, stepped aside to let the two girls pass.

Hagar's eyes were bent upon the ground, yet she knew he was looking at her intently; the very throbbing of her heart told it her.

"You cannot guess what good things every one has been saying about you," cried Jacqueline, when they were fairly in their own rooms.

"I hope I merited them," murmured Hagar, faintly, as she sank wearily in an arm-chair.

"Of course you did," answered her friend, warmly. "There is Van Zandt declares you are perfectly charming; and if that is not true, I would like to know what is! And little Sara Rainsford says it is good as going to church to look at you!"

Hagar heard her not.

Her head drooped—a film came over her eyes, and she half fainted from the pain of a strange sensation in her breast. The over-exertion of the day had been too much for her weak state.

Her insensibility lasted but a moment, however, and the alarmed Jacqueline scarcely perceived her friend's condition before she had partially revived. She aided her, with alarmed haste, to undress, and bathed her head in ice-water, until Hagar declared herself sufficiently well for her young hostess to return to the drawing-room and her guests.

Jacqueline then kissed her tenderly, and bade her good-night, saying, affectionately, what a favorite she was with every one in the house, and how Norman Locke had told her that he loved her already.

As the door closed upon her, Hagar buried her face in the pillows, and cried, passionately,

"I would he hated me!"

The next day, quite early, Hagar returned to her home. Her anxiety to see her uncle was so great that nothing could induce her to remain longer at Randolph Farm.

Jacqueline had been rather injudicious in allowing her friend so little actual repose, for she went back to the cottage even in more miserable health than when she left it.

The days flew on. James Kenworthy grew rapidly worse. To the very last, he was buoyed up with deceitful hopes of returning strength. He never realized that he was going to die—never for one moment did he believe that the Angel of Death hovered around his couch. Hopefulness was one of the characteristics of his lingering disease.

Long as they had expected it, neither mother nor daughter could accustom themselves to his loss. He had been to them so tender and loving a friend; he was so pure, so saint-like in all his ways, so beloved by every one who knew him, that there was, indeed, darkness when his light went out forever. Charity's grief was more wild, more passionate than Hagar's; it had more outward show, more uncontrolled abandonment; but the wound was no deeper, its agony no bitterer to endure.

It is strange how the slightest thing can recall the past. The vacant chair, the silver-headed cane standing in a corner, or the sight of clothing, put off for raiment of immortality, each and all combined to keep the memory of their loss constantly before them.

In a peaceful corner of the village church-yard was laid all that was mortal of James Kenworthy. The shadows of swaying branches flit over the lonely mound, intermingled here and there with a few golden gleams of sunlight—a not inappropriate type of his life, for its shade was deep—its bright spots far between. A white stone, with name and date, is all that marks the spot. Love needs nothing more.

Jacqueline rode down to the cottage quite often, to visit and console her afflicted friend. Sometimes she was accompanied by Van Zandt, and sometimes by Mr. Locke. She pressed Hagar very warmly to spend a few weeks at the Farm, hoping that the change might enliven her spirits and health; but Hagar would not leave her mother alone with her sorrow.

About ten days after the event that had brought desolation into that poor, plain house, Charity, for the

first time, took her daughter into her counsel. It was to debate about their future.

Hagar was much moved at this proof of confidence, this first appeal to her judgment, and, principally, because it reminded her of the now powerless will to which her mother had hitherto turned for assistance.

Charity had an important communication to make to her daughter. She had known the subject of this communication for some time before her brother's death, but an unwillingness to add to Hagar's grief had caused her to withhold it till then.

It was that they were penniless. The hardly earned money she had destined for her child was lost to her forever!

Unwisely attempting speculation, in the hope of increasing the original fund, she had ruined herself and her child in the experiment.

Hagar was less touched than she expected by the tidings. Her mother looked for tears, exclamations, and bursts of sorrow; but the calm breast of the heroic girl contained her despair in silence. Her feelings were always deep, yet she seldom gave outward evidence that they were so.

She only cast her arms around her mother's neck, saying—"And you have borne this dreadful secret so long alone, mother, to save *me!*"

A volume could not have expressed so much to Charity as those few words.

"And now, my *own* child, that you know all, what must we, what *can* we do! We are not quite beggars. This little house, and all that is in it, is yours by your uncle's will. Oh, Hagar! I had *so* longed to place you above want,—to feel that if I should die suddenly, you were provided for as long as you lived!"

And Charity wept—Charity, the strong, iron-willed woman, while that frail, little figure, stood tearless at her side, striving to comfort her!

"Dear mother, I beg of you, do not grieve over this. As you say, we are not quite roofless,—we can work,—sew,—labor with our hands, until we have replaced our lost money!"

Charity looked at her, pityingly. "Poor child—you do not know what labor is."

"But I can learn. I am young and hopeful. I will teach,—sing,—do anything, and everything that can bring in gold."

And Charity answered, but by repeating absently, "Poor child — you do not know what labor is!"

She was thinking of the solemn vow by which she had bound herself to her dead brother, never to return to the stage. A momentary regret, a wild desire seiz-

ed her; but she thought of the peaceful childhood and virtuous girlhood that vow had purchased, and the temptation to break it vanished with wings of lightning.

"Hagar, my dear child," (she always called her "child," though she had entered woman's sunniest period,) "you are pale and haggard. Do not let this misfortune afflict you too much. Go out and breathe the fresh air,—take a walk,—anything to bring the red back to your cheeks. If we *must* work, we will work together;—we shall be happy yet, in spite of Fate and Fortune!"

She tried to smile as Hagar obeyed and left her, but it was a wan, ghastly smile, pale and white as moonlight shining on snow.

Throwing a scarf over her head, Hagar left the house, and walked she scarcely knew whither.

The blow was so sudden, so unexpected, that it was difficult to learn resignation. She tried to think of some plan, some way, by which their fallen fortunes could be retrieved.

She remembered her mother had once been an actress. Was it impossible that *she* might become one also? She knew she had genius—she felt it swaying in a tumultuous tide within her;—could she not turn it and her voice,—that voice so often praised

as rare and melodious, to some account in their now reduced circumstances?

The idea gave her comfort. The very means, now lost, were accumulated by her mother on the stage.

With a thankful heart she saw there was at least *one* way to independence.

In a reverie, Hagar wandered on until she reached the little ivy-covered church. From the force of habit, (for much of her time was spent in that green church-yard,) she unfastened the gate, and passed within the walls. She did not know she was there until she found herself kneeling on the damp grass, beside the simple stone that bore her uncle's name.

For the first time since her mother's avowal of their poverty, she wept. They were burning tears, yet full of exquisite relief. Leaning her young head against the marble, she gave free vent to her feelings, and sobbed as though her heart would break.

She was startled by hearing a sound as of some one coming towards her from among the tall old monuments. She knew who it was before she turned to look. When she did so, she beheld the grave countenance of Norman Locke.

"I came to find you," he said kindly, touching her black dress as he spoke, with a sort of tender pity. "I have been to the cottage. The servant told me you had walked this way."

He sat down on a tomb, and seemed to be looking around him. Hagar ceased weeping, and after awhile managed to ask in a low voice, how he had left Jacqueline.

"Well, and quite anxious to see you."

"And Miss Linda, and all the rest?"

"Linda is at home. There are no visitors at the Farm but me. Why don't you come to us, Hagar? Do you not suppose we should be glad to care for you?"

His deep voice vibrated to the core of her heart, but she did not answer. For a moment there was silence.

He came beside her.

"Hagar," he said passionately, "notwithstanding the sacredness of this place, I *must* speak! It may be long before I have the opportunity again. I love you, Hagar—I love you with an affection as strong as life. When I heard your voice that night upon the river, I knew even then that my soul at last had found its mate. Hagar!"

She was weeping again.

"Listen to me," he said.

Suddenly she turned upon him. Her mild eyes flashed,—her puny form was erect with outraged dignity.

"How DARE you speak so to me? how DARE you

speak to me of love,—*you*, pledged in the sight of God as the husband of Jacqueline?"

"Jacqueline!" oh, with what ineffable bitterness he tossed the word from him. "What is Jacqueline to *me!* Has not she promised herself as my wife, solely because it is her policy? Has not her proud mother worked, schemed, and manœuvred to bring us together, when both mother and daughter merely endured me for money's sake? Answer me *that!* Love! Jacqueline Randolph does not know the meaning of the word! I tell you, Hagar, she knows no more of a love like that I bear to you,—unbounded and enduring as heaven,—than you do, poor lamb, of hatred."

Hagar made a movement to leave him. Her sense of her own passion for this man grew stronger every moment. She panted to go from him before she was tempted even to wrong her friend in thought.

He saw her design, and placed himself before her.

"Hagar, you *must* listen to me. I *implore* you to stay. I promise solemnly not to utter one word that your delicacy can resent."

Passively she sat down on the slab from which he had just risen; she could not resist the magnetism of his wildly earnest eyes.

"Hagar, like you I have a widowed mother, and like yours, she is a noble and beautiful woman. I am her only son. On me devolves the hopes of her life-

time and her great wealth. In my early life, it was her fondest prayer that I should become a good and great man. She saw I had genius,—she saw, too, I had violent passions, and she trusted to the one to correct the others.

"It was not so fated. Temptations assailed me, and I fell. With staring eyes I rushed into sin, and perverted my talents to the basest purposes. As I grew older, I wearied of my shameful life. In disgust I turned my back on my late associates, my former haunts, and sought the love of woman as a haven of rest.

"In Jacqueline, I thought I had found my ideal of the sex. Like you, she is tender and sweet, and gentleness was always necessary to tame a lion like myself. Her mind is well cultivated, she is a lady in the truest sense of the word, and for awhile I was at peace in her society.

"Like a ship that has tossed upon a wild and stormy ocean, and at last comes smoothly into safe harbor, so was it with me. Temptation to do evil had now no power over me; I became a better man.

"I loved Jacqueline as I had never before loved woman, and my wickedness was subdued by that love. I had thought I possessed her own in return; I had thought I controlled her heart. By degrees, my eyes were opened. She *never* has, and does not love me!

Her mother is her master. She said to her, 'Jacqueline, it is my *will* that you marry that man,' and her daughter dared not but obey. I am rich, and Mrs. Randolph's ambition for Jacqueline is wealth.

"Hagar, although I discovered that I was nothing to Jacqueline, I would have married her,—I would have fulfilled my word and gone with her to the altar, knowing she did not love me, and with my own longing for sympathy thrust back upon me!

"But *you* came between us! From the instant I heard your voice, and in it read your soul, I felt that you were created for me alone! You are my destiny,—my wife!

"Think for one moment, Hagar, of what power you hold. You may make me a noble and honored man, worthy the esteem of my fellow creatures; you may be the good influence of my life, or, if you cast me from you, you destroy me forever! I feel that if you reject my love, I shall thenceforth wander through the world an aimless and sinful creature,—wrecked for time and eternity. My fate is in your hands,—be merciful!"

She tried to speak to him, but excitement had taken away the power of her will.

"Hagar," Norman Locke continued, gently taking her hands within his own—"I *know* you love me. I knew it almost as soon as I knew yourself. I read it

in your face, in your actions, in your very avoidance of me. Jacqueline is the bar, the only obstacle that lies between us—you feel it a dishonor to supplant your friend. Oh, Hagar! speak but the word—believe me, freedom will be as welcome to her as to myself. Without your promise to become my wife, I never will break the bond that binds us together—that, and that *only*, can give me a right to do so. Speak, Hagar, speak—tell me you will some day be my wife!"

Hagar *did* speak at last.

She rose from her seat, and ejaculated, firmly,

"Never!"

Then convulsively clasping her hands, she added, solemnly—

"By every token through which one woman reads the heart of another, *Jacqueline loves you!* If she did not at first, with all her soul, she does *now!* Norman Locke, *I* love you too, but rather than degrade my womanhood by crushing my friend's heart, I will ——" a half sob choked her utterance, "break my own!"

She turned, and gliding among the headstones, was gone. Awed and astonished, he made no effort to follow her. Her dignity,—the majesty of her determination,—and the sublime beauty of her sacrifice, impressed him with wonder.

Much as he loved her, he had not dreamed that Hagar White was capable of such grand virtue, such heroic nobility.

It is not necessary to recount by what arguments and entreaties Hagar combated her mother's resolution, nor how, at last, she gained her consent for preparation for the perilous experiment of the life of an actress. She had confidence in her own abilities,—she felt the incentive of the holiest of motives, and to her inexperienced eye success was certain.

In vain her mother pointed out the difficulties, the trials that had beset her own path, and told her of the long struggling warfare before they were conquered.

"You *did* conquer!" was the ever ready and hopeful answer.

Hagar had no desire to become a mere actress. Her ambition, her genius soared high above that. The possession of so glorious a voice alone, gave her a burning desire to study for, and appear on the Italian lyrical stage. Since the ordeal in the churchyard, through which she had passed with a triumph bought only at the price of untold agonies, she had been feverishly anxious to begin her studies.

Mr. Van Dyke was, as a friend, admitted by both mother and daughter into the secret.

The good little man became half frantic with grief at the prospect of the future misery to Hagar which the mere idea involved. He told her of the years of severe study through which she must pass before a début was possible, and of the heart-burnings,—the daily insults,—the rivalries there were to endure, even supposing that début successful.

Hagar received all he had to say as immovably as a rock.

She had decided—she had gained her mother's consent, and thenceforth nothing could shake her purpose.

Mr. Van Dyke, of all other men, was the one best calculated to advise under such circumstances. In Germany he had passed the greater part of his life among struggling aspirants for the lyrical stage. He knew the labor and the probable reward.

When he found that Hagar's resolution was unchangeable, he advised her to go with her mother to Naples, and immediately place herself in one of the theatrical-musical schools there located, her progress in which could alone decide her future.

Then came the terrible, the momentous question—where were to be found the means to defray the expenses of the long journey, and this necessary and invaluable training?

"We can sell the house and furniture," said Charity, "but even that will go but little way. Oh, Hagar, give it up! Do not go from Briartown! Every time I think of it, I cannot help doubting your strength of body and mind, for the attainment of that to which you look forward as the crown of your efforts."

"Mother," Hagar replied proudly, "your scepticism gives me but another reason to succeed."

From that day, Charity ceased to dissuade.

She remembered her own aspirations at Hagar's age, and had pity upon her, blessing God that in her new life, her child was not without protection. She was not to rest solely on her own strength for the resistance of temptations incident to her profession.

The house, once the home of Hagar's grand-parents, was sold. It was simple and poor; the purchase-money was indeed but as a drop in the well.

Something more must be done.

Mr. Van Dyke counselled giving a concert in Briartown, and promised, unsolicited, to secure for the occasion the voluntary assistance of the first artists in the neighboring city.

But Hagar shrank from the idea of singing before the hard, cold eyes, the well-known faces of that ungenerous village.

She was well aware that curiosity alone would fill her concert-room; but with the natural independence

of her temperament, even in her present poverty, she scorned the money of those who had never given her kindness.

The city of Charleston was distant not many hundreds of miles from Briartown. It was decided that her touchingly beautiful organ should for the first time there be heard in public.

The reputation of the place is that of liberality, and especially in musical matters. Charity felt assured of her child's triumph in any concert-room, and a brilliant success was scarcely to be doubted, among the open-hearted, enthusiastic southerners; at all events, their whole little property was risked in the experiment.

Mr. Van Dyke voluntarily took the management of the affair. None could be more anxious for the result than he.

Knowing the positive necessity for properly varied attractions, he would not listen to Hagar's request that, in order to make the expenses as light as possible, the principal burden of the entertainment might come upon herself.

He engaged the most desirable hall for the occasion, got together, and caused rehearsals of a full orchestra, and secured the services of a *tenore* and *basso*, both of whom were public artists of the first reputation and merit.

In three weeks from her uncle's death, the day dawn-

ed on which Hagar was to leave for Charleston, and begin her pilgrimage of patient labor.

From the first moment that Mrs. Randolph had been informed of the destination of Hagar's genius,—of her intended theatrical life,—with lofty indignation she forbade Jacqueline all further intercourse with her. It had been bad enough to tolerate her mother, and that, she told Jacqueline, she had only done from pity to Hagar herself.

The circumstances of the case were now changed. Their friendship must cease,—who ever heard of a sternly virtuous Randolph knowingly associating with a woman of public reputation,—an actress?

So Hagar lost her only friend. She left Briartown beggared in every thing but hope.

Jacqueline never thought of disobeying her mother. She looked upon her will as law, and as such it influenced all her actions. She had never entered a theatre. Her ideas of its evils were much exaggerated,—a sense of its counteracting beauties did not exist in her mind at all. Grieving, therefore, over the depravity of Hagar's heart that had led her to choose so unnatural a lot, she tried to deaden the thought of her into oblivion.

Poor Hagar! but one ever knew the awful sacrifice she had made for that unfaithful friend.

The evening of the concert arrived. To Hagar it was freighted with agony—her heart sank, and her courage left her, for on that night's events depended her own and her mother's future. If she succeeded, all was clear before her, at least it seemed so *then;* if she failed, despair, want, abject poverty awaited them. She knew if she could only command her voice, success was certain, but in her dismay she was attacked with the presentiment of its leaving her at the most critical and important moment. She had heard of such things, had read of their actual event in the biographies of celebrated *prime donne.* She could not chase the fear away. It had haunted her for weeks; and, as on that eventful night she sat, trembling in the dressing-room, listening with a sick heart to the performance of the overture, it rushed upon her with renewed force.

The decisive moment arrived, and Signor ——, the well-attired and elegant *tenore* of the evening, came to lead her out for the opening duetto with himself.

Every one knows what interest a "first appearance" creates, and what anxious desire is felt for the earliest glimpse of the coming *debutante.*

There was some applause, a little excitement, and a great deal of curious attention as Hagar took her place by the footlights. There was nothing in her personal appearance calculated to attract admiration, or cause

the slightest sensation of enthusiasm. She had attired herself very simply in a white lace dress, made low in the neck. Her sleeves were looped up with a few natural green leaves, a wreath of the same encircling her head, and a graceful spray quivering on her breast. These leaves were her only adornments. Charity had taken pride in arranging them with classical simplicity.

The duetto was the celebrated one, "*Da qual di che t'incontrai,*" from Donizetti's opera of "*Linda di Chamouni.*" It opens with a brief recitative movement, commencing at the line,—

"Non so quella canzon m'intenerisce mi rattrista."

The orchestra prelude finished, there reigned a dead silence of expectation throughout the vast and well-filled music-hall.

But in vain Hagar attempted to sing; she essayed again and again,—a husky and almost inaudible sound was all that passed her lips. She felt as though she were sick, dying,—she could hear the wild beating of her own heart.

The leader of the orchestra, practised in cases of the kind, gave a private signal, and the symphony was again executed, that the frightened girl might collect herself. The respite was a god-send. By the time those brief chords were again sounded, she had become calmer, and in a tremulous, unequal voice, executed

her part of the recitative. *Carlo's* solo then gave her an opportunity to regain farther composure, and at the conclusion of her own, which follows immediately afterwards, so admirably, so effectively was it rendered, that a burst of liberal and unanimous applause interrupted the duetto.

Hagar naturally sang with great feeling and dramatic abandon; her lights and shades were always exquisitely managed, but during the remainder of the duet, she surpassed even herself. It was not her singing, however, (for that was still in the rough,) as much as her pathetic and mellow voice, that excited the sympathies of the audience, and the duet was well calculated to exhibit its finest qualities.

Throughout the piece, and especially at the pretty melody, "*O consolarmi affrettisi*," tokens of generous appreciation brought Hagar from despair to rapture. At its termination, shouts of excited approval followed her from the stage; an *encore* was demanded, and the magnificent junction of those two rare voices again delighted the surprised and gratified audience. They came from curiosity, or to while away a few idle hours, and that poor agitated village girl had at once won them from apathy to enthusiasm.

Charity stood leaning her regal person against a side-door, behind the scenes, a position from which she saw and heard all that passed. As soon as Hagar

left the stage, she flew to that exultant mother's arms, and wept for joy. She felt that her ambitious dream was not to remain *all* a dream—she was conscious that she had that night stepped on the borders of its reality.

If she had been an angel, she could not for the moment have felt happier.

The programme for the evening was excellent. Mr. Van Dyke had taken good care of that. The brilliant assemblage had not the slightest cause for ill humor or indifference.

The other artists were cordially received, not only for the sake of the *débutante*, but because they were deservedly public favorites.

Hagar's next essay was a quaint Irish ballad, one of Moore's. Its rendition was appropriate, unexaggerated, and pleased by its graceful flow of melody.

Her great effort—her crowning glory, for it proved such, was reserved for the last. It was, "*Qui la Voce sua soave;*" she sang it as she never sang it again. She never afterwards felt the same inspiration. Like a flood of sunlight, she made it to float around the hall. A holy presence seemed to pervade the building—it was like *reality;* one appeared to *see* something!

"Good heavens!" a veteran musician was heard to exclaim as he left the house, after the concert, "why on earth is that girl advertised as going to Italy to be

educated? All that science can do, will but spoil her originality and freshness!"

The entertainment over, exhausted by the efforts of the evening, Hagar begged to be taken at once to her hotel. She longed for darkness and silence, that she might weep away some of her excited pleasure.

As they were passing down the stairs to the rear entrance, where the carriage was stationed, one of the workmen of the hall put a folded slip of paper in her hand. Looking at it hastily, she saw by the initials at the bottom, that it was from Norman Locke. He had been there, although she had not discovered his presence.

Hagar was tremblingly glad that her mother had not noticed the incident, for she wished to bear this grief alone—it was sacred.

When disrobing for the night, she had an opportunity to peruse the note carefully. Thus it ran. It was written almost illegibly, in pencil.

"Oh, Hagar! I can save you all this! Such a life is without your sphere—you were made to love, and receive love, and not to gather Fame.

"Be, then, my cherished and honored wife—fulfill your destiny, for I am yours as certainly as God meant you to be mine!

"Hagar, you were *born* for me—without you, I am nothing—you *must* be mine! Do not think to fly from me. I shall follow you to the ends of the earth. If you go to Italy, as they say you will, I shall pursue and haunt you till you yield. I am reckless and violent when my passions are aroused.

"Oh, Hagar!—my own, my decreed wife—give me up your love! I am less to Jacqueline than the earth she treads. I have tried her—assayed the affection she professes, and found it dross. Yet I cannot break my word, until you give me a holy and imperative *right*.

"I am a man of honor; I will sacrifice even you for my honor's sake. Say but you will marry me, and I am free to act—acknowledge that your happiness depends upon the rupture of my tie with Jacqueline, and I will break it guiltlessly.

"I beg of you, Hagar, give up your scruples; they become false and sinful when so much is at stake. Write to me—give me but the least sign, and all will yet be well. For me, everything is risked. I am in your power—you can do with me as you will. Shape my course upward or downward—dower me with heaven or hell; you have at your mercy

"N. L.

"I am staying at the ——— hotel. Oh, Hagar!

you will never be so loved again, should you live until God destroys the world!"

She read this strange and contradictory note with some tears and much sorrow. That a man so carefully punctilious of his honor, could still persist in demanding the sacrifice of her own, were two things she found hard to reconcile together.

Hagar's was not an everyday character. Most women, circumstanced like herself, would have yielded to the promptings of nature; but with her, principle triumphed over passion.

She placed the note under her pillow and wept herself to sleep. Her tears, strange to say, were those of mingled joy and grief—joy for her public success, grief for her ill-fated affection.

She knew that she should never become the wife of Mr. Locke. His love for her had grown up like sudden flame, and like flame, she thought that it was fated to perish.

The next day, Norman Locke received from Hagar the following brief answer:

"I cannot unsay what I have said. One above saw the unalterable sincerity I felt, when I uttered those words. Oh, Mr. Locke, give the affection you offer

me to Jacqueline. She is worthy of that happiness—she loves you with a true woman's devotion.

"I suffer from this as bitterly as you, but God helps me to bear my burden patiently. Oh, Mr. Locke, there is no consolation like to His!"

The strong man wept like a child, as he read. He bowed his head upon his clenched hands, and moaned—

"Then, God console me!"

Norman Locke did *not* follow Hagar to Italy. Six months after, Jacqueline Randolph became his wedded wife.

It was on a Sunday that Charity and Hagar sailed for Italy. There was peace in the day and in the air. The sounds of labor had all ceased,—not even the rumble of wheels was heard in the broad and silent streets. Peal after peal of soft Sabbath bells was all that met the ear. To Hagar, they were laden with balm. As the vessel moved from her moorings, solemn and sad, they rang out upon the still air, filling it with holy music. Thoughts of patient resignation came with them, quelling the misery of her who list-

ened. It was the last sound she heard as the steamer left the American shores.

All that young girl's soul was with her Art. She turned to it the entire strength of her being, and in it sought forgetfulness for the past.

Mr. Van Dyke had given her a letter of introduction to Count Silva, one of the principal patrons of a musical dramatic college, in Naples. On this letter hung all Hagar's hopes.

A few days after their arrival in the Italian city, Charity sent the letter to the Count, accompanied with her own and Hagar's card. In the evening of the same day, the gentleman himself called upon them, and what with his imperfect English, and the help of Hagar's still more imperfect knowledge of Italian, gave them to understand that the school was already overstocked with pupils, and not even to oblige his *amico*, Mr. Van Dyke, could he add to the number.

Charity, however, saw at a glance that he said this merely because disappointed in Hagar's unattractive appearance, and her face, latterly, had indeed acquired a stolid expression, far removed from that of a musical genius. It was evident to her that the Count

fancied he was escaping from introducing an extremely undesirable dead weight in the establishment under his patronage.

Hagar also, read the real meaning of his excuse. It did not alarm her. She knew the exact merit of her glorious organ. When the Count rose, and, with a great deal of Italian suavity, was bowing himself out, expressing his regret at his inability to oblige them, Hagar said to him, with some malicious satisfaction, although he had not offered to try her voice—

"Will you not hear me sing, Signor?"

He hesitated for an instant—looked as if he wished himself somewhere else, and then, his native gallantry coming to the rescue, expressed delighted willingness to listen to her.

Hagar was not at all frightened. She had never felt cooler in her life, than when she sat down to the instrument, and she was well aware that the Count was a critical judge of music, an amateur composer himself, and a distinguished patron of the Art.

With perfect self-possession, and an ease at which she herself was astonished, she began a canzonette that she had learned since leaving America. It was quite pretty, and displayed her clear upper notes very finely, in a sort of Tyroline refrain at its conclusion.

The effect on Count Silva was all that Hagar could desire. He sprang from his seat, without uttering a

word, rushed to the piano, and examined the sheet of music from which she had been singing.

"Did you use this key?" he demanded, abruptly—"or did you make a lower transposition?"

"I sang it exactly as it is written," was the composed response.

"*Madre di Dio!*—is it possible your voice has such power in its upper register? Sing it again—or, no, just try the refrain."

She complied. He was evidently astonished at the quality and compass of voice which she displayed.

"Signorina!" he exclaimed, with unaffected sincerity—"I congratulate you. As far as I can judge from your execution of this canzonette, you possess a rare and admirable organ—will you allow me to hear you try another and more difficult solo, before pronouncing critically on its merits?"

Hagar now felt slightly alarmed. With some trepidation she sought for her copy of "*Qui la Voce*," which she rightly esteemed her master-piece.

Her embarrassment increased when Count Silva insisted on accompanying her himself.

When she had finished, she had the mortification of knowing that she had by no means done herself justice. The Count praised her highly, however, and to the great delight of the poor, friendless, and ambitious girl, told her, although there was much for her both to

learn and unlearn, her voice was so uncommonly fine, that it deserved every advantage of cultivation. He ended by complimenting her correct taste, and assuring her that she should be admitted to the college if twenty other pupils were displaced to receive her.

Then kissing her hand, he went away.

The next morning, Hagar was introduced to the *maestro* of the Institution, and, after passing the necessary examinations, was admitted as a student,—the annual payment, being, fortunately for her, a merely nominal affair. This circumstance enabled her to commence an additional course of private lessons with one of the best masters in Naples.

Her improvement was rapid. She astonished and delighted all who were interested in her progress, by her zeal and perseverance. So great was her assiduity—so unconquerable her application to the study of her beloved Art, that Charity became alarmed for her health. Her fragile form grew daily more slender, her face thinner and older looking, while a bright, hectic flush, burned ever upon her cheeks, and a sensation similar to that she had felt at Randolph Farm, very often flashed through her chest.

Charity tried to reason with her, and pointed out the absolute necessity for occasional rest and exercise; but the excited enthusiasm that was gradually causing

the spirit to wear away the frame, grew impatient of control.

Count Silva became one of their best friends. Although naturally exacting and selfish, towards those whom he liked, he was as amiable and genial as could be desired. To Hagar, he took an especial fancy. Independently of her talent, her gentleness pleased him, from its agreeable contrast with the dispositions of his own country-women.

To the Count, Hagar owed many a pleasant drive, and glimpse of country verdure, for which she would otherwise have longed in vain, and for another and vaster delight, she was likewise indebted to him. The Count possessed a box at the Opera, and quite frequently placed it at the disposal of his protegé and her mother.

There, Hagar first heard what great singing was—there first beheld the magnificence of impassioned acting, and there, I need scarcely say, her own ambition was still more strengthened and excited.

Years—two fleeting years mingled with the past. Years of misery and happiness, struggles and peace, contest and victory to Hagar. She was now nearly twenty years of age.

* * * * * * * *

It was the night of her début. She had grown perfectly fearless of its results, and dreaded it not; a sublime courage was infused into her very soul. She felt as though she could have gone before the whole world, and defied intimidation from it.

A legion of demons thrusting despair at her spirit, could not have impaired her faith in her own beautiful steadfastness.

The shadow of angel wings hovered over her even then.

The Opera was injudiciously chosen. Count Silva was its composer. It was new, and called by the whimsical title of "Il Prieco D'Amore." Although scientifically composed, and full of thrilling *detached* beauties, it was heavy and inglorious as a whole. The plot of the *libretto* was barbarously wild and unnatural —the product of some rabid imagination let loose.

Count Silva had written this Opera for Hagar; he had studied her voice, and adapted the part of the principal character to it. From very gratitude for those two years of kindness, she could not refuse his request to perform in "Il Prieco D'Amore," on the night of her *début*. She would have preferred to have chosen another and popular creation, an Opera by one of the composers of the people; but to Silva she owed a debt of thankfulness, and, at any sacrifice, she determined to repay him.

She knew the work could not but fail, or, at best, be "damned with faint praise;" yet heroically she vowed to save it if she could from its impending destiny.

It was placed upon the stage with perfect scenery and surroundings; gold was lavished on it in showers, for its princely author longed for Fame,—and, alas! after thirsting and toiling for it, found at length that he had bowed at the shrine of the unattainable and far.

Il Prieco D'Amore failed. Its libretto alone would have dragged it down. Not even with Italians could such fantastic imaginings succeed!

* * * * * * * * *

Great heaven! whose were those flashing, burning eyes, gleaming down upon the young *prima donna?*

She had braved the scorn and hisses of the outraged audience—she had stood undaunted before their frantic disappointment; but, beneath the power of those two eyes, she sank abashed.

There was something in them that revived, she knew not how,—old thoughts, old feelings,—they thrilled her with recollections of a wild dream, faded long ago—forgotten—despised.

The curtain fell.

Hagar left her mother gesticulating violently, as she

spoke to the excited *maestro*, at one of the wings, and staggered to her dressing-room.

Standing at its entrance she beheld, as she felt she *should* behold, NORMAN LOCKE.

No word of greeting passed his lips—no sign of recognition took place between them; but, coming to meet her, he said, hoarsely—

"At last, thank God, I MAY claim your love! Jacqueline is an angel in heaven! *I am free!*"

She looked at him as though he were a dream-phantom—a creature of her own brain. He appeared like one broken down with age and infirmities. By the deep set lines of his ever-expressive face, it was evident he had been "a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief." His cheeks were sunken, and his eyes glittering with the unnatural brightness of excitement.

Hagar did not utter a word. Her gaze was fixed, riveted, fascinated, as it were, upon him.

How *could* she speak? How tell him, then and there, that she deemed her old passion for him a mere infatuation of her youth? How say to him, that as time healed the first bitterness of her feelings, she had grown to rejoice at her escape—to look upon him as unworthy of her love—how tell him *that?*

A dimness came over all around her. The old sen-

sation of sharp pain vibrated in her breast—uttering a faint cry, she fell.

Wildly catching her in his strong arms, Norman Locke called for assistance. It came too late. The drama of her life was ended.

Hagar was DEAD!

THE END.

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